Commentary
December 2002

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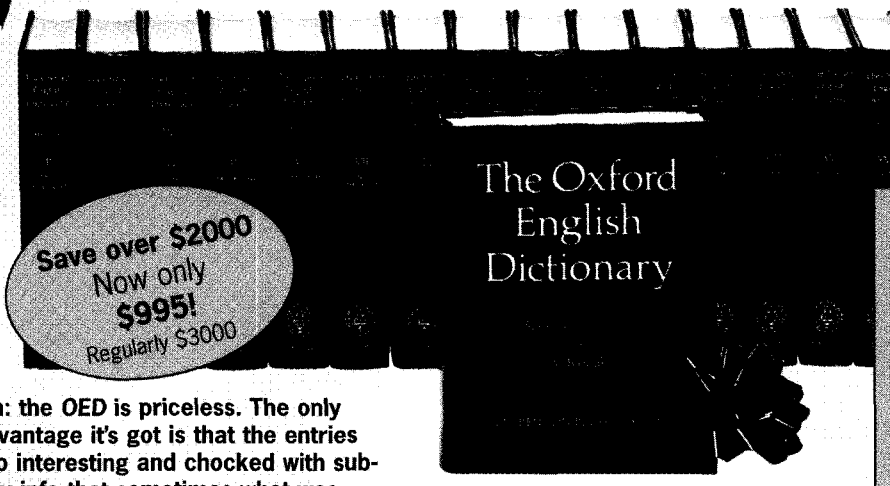

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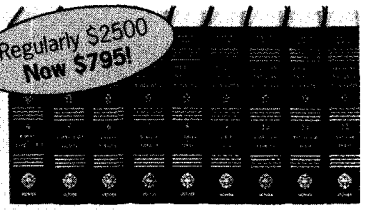

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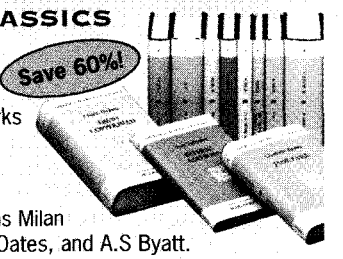

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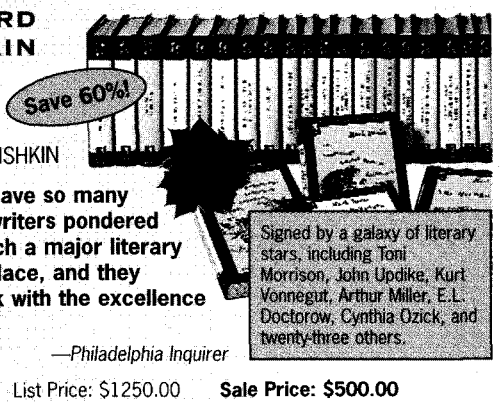

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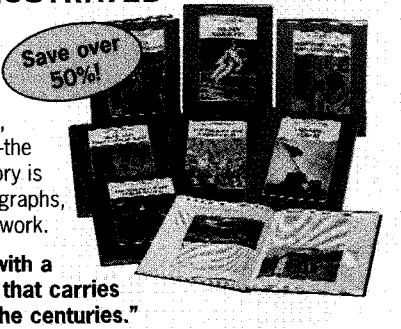

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Commentary
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Letters from Readers

Oil Dependence

To the Editor:

R. James Woolsey argues that American dependence on Persian Gulf oil generally, and Saudi oil in particular, creates a vulnerability that would be reduced by cutting U.S. oil consumption and imports, increasing Russian production, and increasing our use of alternative fuels ["Defeating the Oil Weapon," September].

But to begin at the beginning: there is no "oil weapon." U.S. vulnerability to the effects of price increases and supply disruptions is independent of either the degree to which we import our oil or the source of our imports. However counterintuitive, this stems from the fact that there can be only one price in the international oil market (excluding transportation costs and the like), so that a supply disruption raises prices identically for those who import all of their oil from the Persian Gulf, for those who import none of their oil from the Gulf, and for those who import no oil at all.

The UK, which is self-sufficient with respect to oil, and Japan, which is completely import-dependent, face the same oil prices. In 1973, the "embargo" directed against the U.S. and the Netherlands had no effect at all, since both countries were able to buy oil in international markets on precisely the same terms as everyone else. (Prices increased because of the production cut by Arab OPEC, and gasoline lines in the U.S. were caused by price and allocation regulations, which Ronald Reagan had the wisdom to discard in 1981.) Accordingly, we face no "predicament" as a result of dependence.

Mr. Woolsey tries to circumvent this fact by arguing that only the Saudis can provide spare production in the face of a future crisis that might yield a price increase. That is simply incorrect. Data from the federal Energy Information Administration—which is conservative in such matters—show that excess production capacity outside the Persian Gulf is 2 to 3 million barrels per day (mbd). The U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) holds about 583 million barrels, with a drawdown capacity of about 4 mbd. If all Iraqi and Kuwaiti production were to cease, and Saudi production remained constant, the reduction would be about 4.5 mbd. If Saudi production were cut by an additional 3.5 mbd—strange behavior in the face of a price increase, particularly with U.S. forces nearby—world production would be reduced by about 10 percent. But even if only half the available replacement capacity from outside the Persian Gulf were used, prices would rise by about $12 per barrel over the going rate of about $29 per barrel. For purposes of comparison, prices in inflation-adjusted terms in 1982 were over $56 per barrel.

Yes, more excess production capacity, other things being equal, would moderate even further the effects of a supply disruption. The U.S. cannot create much more production capacity, Mr. Woolsey claims, so we must become more "efficient"; but he never makes clear why market forces fail to yield optimal efficiency. Does Mr. Woolsey really believe that bureaucrats and politicians are better than the market at foreseeing future supply disruptions? Apparently he does, since he advocates tax credits and other regulatory measures that have never worked and that—for reasons both economic and technological—cannot work.

Mr. Woolsey also thinks we should "help" (that is, subsidize) the expansion of oil-production capacity in Russia because expanded capacity there would reduce oil prices and the price effects of a future Persian Gulf disrup-

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tion. Here again, is there a reason that market forces are insufficient to engender optimal investment in such insurance? Mr. Woolsey does not say. He then advocates a modern version of the Synthetic Fuels Corporation—a Carter-era disaster—to develop alternatives to petroleum-based transportation fuels, a proposal he alleges to be economic even with oil prices as low as $10 or $15 per barrel. Really? Then why isn't the greedy private sector producing such fuels?

The real problem that the U.S. faces, hardly mentioned by Mr. Woolsey, is that Arab oil revenues are used indirectly to fund terrorist activities, a problem of national-security policy rather than of energy policy. Notwithstanding Mr. Woolsey's optimism, U.S. oil consumption cannot be reduced more than trivially, particularly given the needs attendant upon future economic growth. A reduction in U.S. or world oil demand would affect low-cost Saudi or Persian Gulf production little if at all. Replacing the Baathist regime in Baghdad would do far more to reduce oil prices and lessen the threat of disruption.

BENJAMIN ZYCHER
Pacific Research Institute
San Francisco, California

TO THE EDITOR:

The vicious and bloodthirsty attack on America that took place on September 11, 2001 was carried out mostly by Saudi nationals, subsidized by the wealth of the Saudi oil cartel, led by a scion of one of Saudi Arabia's wealthiest families, and inspired by the Wahhabism that is the official theology of the Saudi state. That they did what they did is testimony to the totalitarian intensity of their version of the Islamic faith and to their annihilative hatred of the West, modernity, and modernity's great symbol, America.

But the attack of September 11 was also testimony to something else, something indigenous to America that R. James Woolsey fails to note: a genuine fifth column of American supporters of Saudi Arabia, motivated by worship not of Allah but of the almighty dollar, whose pagan rites are performed at the shrine of the oil cartel. American defenders of this cartel have maintained a criminal indifference to the raging anti-Americanism of their Saudi clients. It is they who left America defenseless against the plots of Osama bin Laden—not by being his co-conspirators but by systematically shielding Saudi Arabia, bin Laden's shadow church and bank, from the scrutiny it deserves.

Saudi wealth pays for vast influence among the rich in America, operating through the great multinational banking and brokerage houses and the energy companies as well as through media conglomerates, think tanks, and other eminently respectable institutions. The tentacles of this influence reach into the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Defense Department, and all the other agencies of the federal government responsible for protecting and defending the American people from foreign attack. They also reach into American electoral politics, mainly through the Republican party, which is organically incapable of imagining that money and patriotism can ever come into contradiction.

With a subversive finesse akin to that once displayed by Soviet agents (and no less sinister for being based in wealth rather than in ideology), the Saudis and their American friends have neutralized the nation's defenses. Even as American military bases were being blown up, American naval vessels attacked, and American embassies truck-bombed by al Qaeda operatives financed by Saudi wealth and inspired by Saudi religious doctrine, Saudi Arabia itself continued to be depicted as playing a "moderate" role in the world. American intelligence agents who have tried to explore this Saudi role soon learn how careers in government service are ruined.

The American henchmen of the Saudi oil cartel need to be exposed. Their wealth must not be allowed to shield them from inquiry. If their service to the Saudis is found to have transgressed the bounds of patriotism, they should be brought to the same bar of justice as were the Rosenbergs and Alger Hiss. There must not be a double standard in this country, one for leftist traitors and another for their rightist kin.

TOM A. MILSTEIN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Since the Gulf war, the U.S. government has dominated oil production in the Persian Gulf as a result of its military occupation of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other countries. If the U.S wanted to lean on these countries to increase what R. James Woolsey calls their "swing capacity" production, it could do so almost overnight. Oil prices would fall to $15 a barrel, or $1 per gallon for gasoline, and the American public would be saved tens of billions of dollars.

It would be useful to identify the lobbying forces that influence the U.S. government to keep the price of oil so high and ask how the American public might persuade its government to act in the public's interest and lower the price of oil. Contrary to some commentators, the battle for lower oil and gas prices is not "over there." It is "over here"—inside the Beltway.

CARL OLSON
State Department Watch
Woodland Hills, California

TO THE EDITOR:

R. James Woolsey favors conservation and the development of alternative transportation technologies and energy sources in order to wean ourselves from dependence on Saudi oil. But he has no patience for the view that we should try to encourage these good things by raising the price of oil artificially. The Saudis' swing capacity, he argues, will always enable them to dump enough oil on the market to keep prices down and thus to force us to maintain our gas-guzzling ways.

Here, it seems to me, he fails to deal with a rather obvious possibility. If we were to tax gas aggressively at the pump, the Saudis could always try to defeat the measure, as Mr. Woolsey says, by arbitrarily increasing the supply. But nothing would stop us from increasing the tax still more, no matter what was happening to actual oil prices. The proceeds would

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It might be objected that these days an increase in any tax is politically unachievable. But there already are gas taxes. All that is required is legislation authorizing the President to deal aggressively both with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and with the tax at the pump when the national interest so requires.

LOUISE WEINBERG
School of Law
University of Texas
Austin, Texas

TO THE EDITOR:

As R. James Woolsey notes, despite our significant progress in energy efficiency, we are now more dependent on foreign sources than ever before, with close to 60 percent of our oil now being imported. But there may be a more useful approach to this problem than those he suggests: the use of battery-powered electric vehicles (EV's), which, unlike the hybrid cars Mr. Woolsey mentions, rely exclusively on electric power.

The auto industry deliberately commercializes hybrid cars, which, unlike pure EV's, require gas and cannot be charged directly from an electrical outlet. Until automakers decide to operate in the national interest, especially in this time of war, the federal government should heavily subsidize further battery development, promote an infrastructure of rapid-charging stations, and aid in the cost of EV production.

MORRIS ALTSCHULER
Rockville, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

R. James Woolsey mentions hybrid electric vehicles as one strategy we should employ to reduce U.S. oil dependence. But even hybrids like the Toyota Prius and Honda Civic, which are greatly subsidized by their manufacturers, remain several thousand dollars more expensive to purchase than their internal-combustion counterparts. And although hybrids are very fuel-efficient, conventional cars already get high gas mileage, so the hybrids' fuel savings fail to cover their extra cost.

Hybrids do reduce tailpipe emissions as well as petroleum use, so some subsidy may be justified. The IRS currently allows a $2,000 tax deduction for most hybrid purchases, and the Senate energy bill proposes to increase this to a $3,500 tax credit for 2002 models.

MICHAEL E. CANES
McLean, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

R. James Woolsey surprisingly omits nuclear energy as one means of liberating ourselves from the stranglehold of the Saudis. Despite the environmental hysteria we sometimes hear, nuclear energy is clean, safe, and inexpensive. France and Japan rely on it for 75 to 80 percent of their energy needs. President Bush has tepidly advocated the growth of nuclear power, but given the political clout of the environmentalist lobby, it will take political courage to confront the issue.

FREDERIC WILE
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Among the useful suggestions R. James Woolsey makes for blunting the "oil weapon," one is completely unrealistic. The conversion of cellulose grown on fallow land into ethanol is unlikely to make a dent in the supply of liquid fuels for transportation. The effort to discover or engineer micro-organisms capable of digesting cellulose efficiently has been going on for the better part of 30 years, but the bugs still do not find cellulose very much to their taste. Even assuming that we had such organisms, supplying them with nitrogen, separating them from the alcohol product, processing the cellulose, and other technological hurdles would make the fuel much more expensive than liquid hydrocarbons from petroleum.

MORDECAI SHELEF
Bloomfield Village, Michigan

R. JAMES WOOLSEY writes:

Of my eight correspondents, three—either implicitly or explicitly--want to assess our national policies regarding oil entirely in economic (or in one case in economic and environmental) terms, ignoring politics and strategy for the war in which we are engaged, two wish I had written about domestic lobbies and interest groups, and three have views about technology differing from my own.

Several correspondents add useful and interesting ideas, some on the subject on which I was writing, others on related issues. But Benjamin Zycher seems to live in a world inhabited by a limited number of economists and no one else—a world of perfect markets maintained pristine from the influences of war, politics, or other messy things. If it were not a slur on a number of able economists who are perfectly willing to factor such realities into their analyses, one would be tempted to borrow a line of George Orwell's about intellectuals: "One has to be an economist to believe things like that. No ordinary man could be such a fool."

Mr. Zycher asserts confidently that "there is no oil weapon." It is important to realize the reason for this confidence in the face of common sense, Saudi crowding of the U.S. on various issues in the Middle East as recently as just before 9/11, the oil-price spikes and the following recessions of 1979 and 1973 (when even Mr. Zycher admits the price increase was caused "because of the production cut by Arab OPEC"), and so on and so forth. The reason is Mr. Zycher's apparent belief that there is no effect on the U.S. as long as it is "able to buy oil in international markets on precisely the same terms as everyone else." So an oil weapon that punishes all consumers is, to him, no weapon. But what is it about this lack of differentiation—which I fully recognize—that makes such a weapon any less useful, or indeed any less attractive, to those who wield it?

According to Mr. Zycher, it is "simply incorrect" for me to contend that "only the Saudis can provide spare production in the face of a future crisis." It would indeed be incorrect if I had so written. My article states that "nearly three-quarters" of the world's "swing" capacity lies in the "Middle East, including the Caspian Basin" and that the tactical power conferred by such Middle Eastern capacity lies "largely" with Saudi Arabia. A "large" share of three-quarters would constitute half or so of the world's

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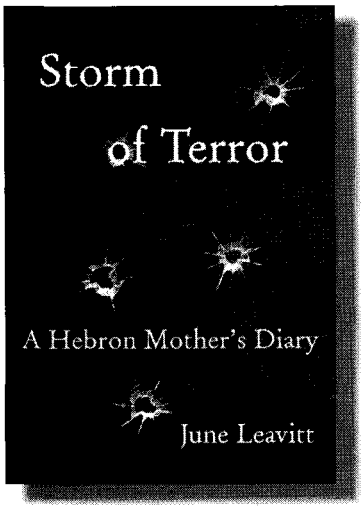

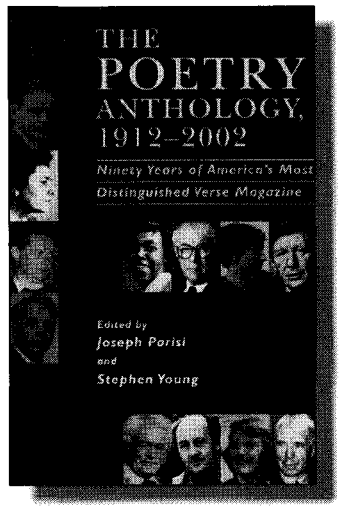

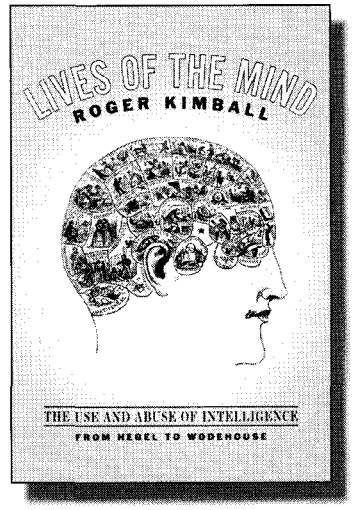

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Roger Kimball
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swing capacity, and this is what the Saudis possess—not "all." But the substantial share of such capacity held by the Saudis does give them what Edward L. Morse and James Richard, in their definitive article on this subject in the March/April issue of *Foreign Affairs* (cited in my piece), called "the energy equivalent of nuclear weapons." Mr. Zycher avoids disputing the views of real experts on the oil market such as Morse and Richard by misstating what I say.

He claims that I advocate "a modern version of the Synthetic Fuels Corporation." Readers will search my piece in vain for that, too. Instead, they will find that I urge such steps as increased tax credits for hybrid vehicles. But Mr. Zycher is on a rampage against anything that would take into account external factors not priced by the market. "Is there a reason," he asks, "that market forces are insufficient?" Happily, he was not consulted with regard to the U.S. government support that made possible the commercialization of the Internet (originally the Defense Department's DARPANET), commercial communications satellites and space-launch vehicles (there's this outfit called NASA), and, for that matter, railroads (hint: the U.S. government had a small hand in getting those built, too).

Mr. Zycher's final attempted "gotcha" is quite remarkable, particularly in light of his assertion that "there is no oil weapon." He alleges that I "hardly mention" the "real problem": that "Arab oil revenues are used indirectly to fund terrorist activities." Yet the first and last sentences of my article make it clear that this and other malign uses of oil revenues, such as for Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, are in fact the problem that my piece is addressing. Did he read it?

Tom A. Milstein, with vigor, and Carl Olson, somewhat less forcefully, stress the importance of focusing on domestic economic interests and lobbies and their roles regarding oil and oil-producing states. It is certainly a worthy subject—it just wasn't mine.

Louise Weinberg likes gasoline taxes. So would I if they were not the third rail of American politics. Again, we are in a war, and we need an energy policy that will take effect quickly and will support the war effort. If I thought gasoline taxes would be more quickly accepted than subsidies for hybrids, I would favor them.

I have no problem in principle with Morris Altschuler's electric cars, but I do not agree with him that subsidizing them would be "more useful" than the path I suggest. The reason is that the state of battery technology is not nearly as advanced as that of hybrids and of producing fuels from waste. Both of these are, essentially, available now technologically. Batteries with the capability to compete with internal-combustion engines are not, and are unlikely to be for some time.

Michael E. Canes is willing to subsidize hybrids but apparently only because they reduce tailpipe emissions. That may be one reason; but another reasonable basis for the government's encouraging a technology is the goal of reducing what we pay to oil-exporting states that—in different ways—provide the funds for those who are at war with us.

Frederic Wile is surprised that I omitted any discussion of nuclear power. But our strategic problem is oil, and oil is no longer used in substantial volume to produce electricity; its share of electricity generation in this country is now down around 2 percent and dropping. Consequently, unless Mr. Altschuler's batteries get developed, Mr. Wile's nuclear power will not be fueling transportation any time soon.

Finally, Mordecai Shelef opines that conversion of cellulose into ethanol is "completely unrealistic" because we do not yet have micro-organisms capable of digesting cellulose. He also cites issues of processing, like "supplying [the organisms] with nitrogen." But he is simply wrong about those organisms. None of them needs to be supplied with nitrogen, and at least three have been genetically engineered to digest the C5 sugars that are produced when polymers of hemicellulose are hydrolyzed (by heat); one of these also produces two of the three enzymes needed to hydrolyze cellulose by enzymatic action, and the third enzyme can easily be purchased. Although separation from alcohol was solved years ago, some of these developments are relatively recent. They were at least well under way when Senator Richard Lugar and I published "The New Petroleum" in *Foreign Affairs* nearly four years ago, and the technology has progressed rapidly since then.

For up-to-date information about this important and fast-moving field, readers should avoid Mr. Shelef's counsel and consult real experts: Lee Lynd of Dartmouth (cited in my article) on the economics and the overall feasibility of the technology, and Lonnie Ingram of the University of Florida on the relevant developments in genetic engineering.

Jewish Images

TO THE EDITOR:

According to the second installment of David Gelernter's mystical, Zen-like, free-association fancies, Judaism is fully definable in neither halakhic nor historical terms ["Judaism Beyond Words: Part 2," September]. It is defined, rather, by "a still, small voice that is startling in its murmurous subtlety." Mr. Gelernter's hearing seems sufficiently acute to pick up these subtle murmurs, which have told him that the "essence" of Judaism consists not of deeds, words, beliefs, concepts, and values but of a "series of images that overhang its broad, deep, sacred literature like a mist over the sea." Unfortunately, judging by what it has whispered to Mr. Gelernter, the voice is rather poorly informed.

Mr. Gelernter claims that "one of Judaism's deepest thoughts is that the ineffable, transcendent reality of God can be closer to you if it is separated from you—by a veil, a tangible screen." But this thought is not found or implied in the canonical texts of the Torah. Moreover, the Hebrew term for "veil" (*masveh*) that Mr. Gelernter has chosen to connote something that "symbolizes God's tran-

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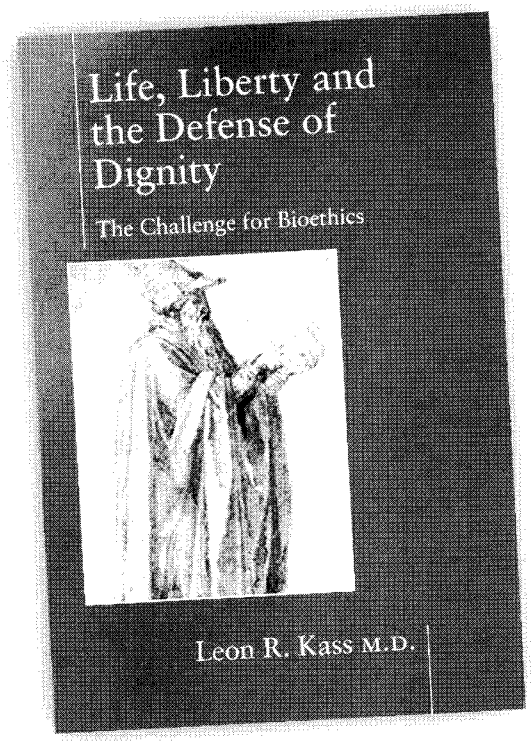
Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity

The Challenge for Bioethics

By Leon R. Kass



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scendence" appears in only a single episode of the Bible (Exodus 34:33-35), rarely in rabbinical literature, and never in a symbolic sense. It is always just a simple, literal veil. The Talmud and midrash use instead the terms *pargod* (veil) and *vilon* (curtain) to denote the spiritual partition between God and His creation. Similarly, the term *masakh* (screen) appears frequently in the Bible, mostly with respect to the partitions of the tabernacle, and, unlike *masveh*, is also used symbolically in kabbalistic and hasidic literature (though not in the sense that Mr. Gelernter attaches to *masveh*).

Nor are the tablets and Ark of the Covenant, Torah scrolls, or the texts in mezuzahs and tefillin "hidden," as Mr. Gelernter says. They are simply housed in their respective enclosures, just as families are not hidden in their homes, feet are not hidden in shoes, and towels are not hidden in linen closets. Only a strangely distorted perspective sees as "hidden" the countless things in the world that are encompassed by other things for purposes other than concealment.

In a similar vein, the Western Wall "has no openings and windows" not because it represents some profound symbolic mystery but because it needed to be solid to support the Temple Mount. "Standing right in front of it you have a vista of nothing"—which is precisely the vista one has when standing right in front of any opaque object. "What other religion focuses such tenderness on a (seemingly) overpowering blank?" The other religion is Islam, and the blank is the Qa'aba in Mecca, which with its black stone is also a sacred "blank" object touched and kissed by the faithful. Large blank stones were commonly used as pagan cult objects in the Roman Near East, and this is considered by historians to be the source of the Islamic practice.

Mr. Gelernter cites Gershom Scholem's quotation of a minor hasidic rabbi to the effect that the Israelites at Mount Sinai heard from God only the first letter of the Ten Commandments, a silent *aleph*, thus transforming, according to Scholem, "the revelation on Mount Sinai into a mystical revelation, pregnant with infinite meaning, but without specific meaning." This view contravenes the rabbinic consensus that the Israelites heard from God at least the first two Commandments, which do indeed have a specific meaning. Scholem spent most of his illustrious career attempting to undermine the historical normativeness of rabbinic Judaism, so selective and inconsequential quotations like this one should be discounted.

"Jews," says Mr. Gelernter, "want to understand their sacred texts but also to nullify their meanings; to pass through the meaning and come out the far side"; they want "to achieve meaninglessness." Perhaps there are a few Jews besides Mr. Gelernter who want (or think they want) to do this. But then what? Will they join with would-be mystics of other religions in a nothingness-affirming chant of "*om*" and then adjourn to dream of the void? Nahmanides, the great medieval scholar whom Mr. Gelernter drafts as a supporter of meaninglessness, would be appalled by this misuse of his Torah commentary.

Finally, the hasidic ritual of *melaveh malkah* described by Mr. Gelernter is, like most of his article, a figment of his imagination. There is no deliberate attempt during this end-of-Sabbath ceremony to "shake off" words or "pass through meaning and come out on the other side." Nor do Hasidim seek to come "face to face . . . with the actual face of the Torah," which supposedly comprises nothing but shapes and sounds, which in turn supposedly comprise "the beloved face and voice of the Jewish people . . . of the mothers and martyrs, heroes and fathers, scholars and children; and of their own departed." Having lived among Hasidim, studied Hasidism, and participated in their *melaveh malkah*s for many years, I can attest that this is pure fantasy. Whatever else they may be, Hasidim are faithful to the Judaic tradition, the least anthropocentric of religious traditions, and no traditional Jewish practice involves contemplating the faces of other Jews, living or dead.

R.A. FOXBRUNNER
Silver Spring, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

David Gelernter's observations on the unspoken aspects of Judaism recall my own thoughts and feelings during my first encounter with the Western Wall. I had previously seen great cathedrals and Asian temples, and though I marveled at the devotion and virtuosity required to build such structures, there was no underlying metaphysical component. But the impact of the Wall is emotionally powerful enough to have pushed even this secular Jew toward a religious experience. In its silence and nothingness it encompasses the unknowable.

ARNOLD FLICK
La Jolla, California

DAVID GELERNTER writes:

R.A. Foxbrunner's objections fall into two categories. The first has to do with a confusion between prose and poetry, or (in a sense) between *p'shat* (the plain sense) and *d'rash* (the deeper truth, or alternatively "free-association fancy"). A person unwilling to read Judaism as if it were poetry is unlikely to accept that a word (such as "face") might have more than one meaning; that the number of times a word appears in the Torah is no measure of its importance, or of our duty to interpret it; that one act might be described in two different ways (say, as "enclosing" and as "hiding"), depending on your point of view; that an object like the Wall might have a utilitarian purpose and also a symbolic meaning.

Such misunderstandings (as they seem to me) are easy to refute. It is true, for example, that the Western Wall "needed to be solid to support the Temple Mount"—just as it is true that we "need" to kindle lights before the Sabbath-evening meal, because otherwise how could we see to eat?, or that the Hebrew words for "one" and "love" must have the same numerical value, because that is how Semitic orthography works, or that public health in ancient Israel might have been served (as many 19th- and 20th-century rationalists pointed out) by the halakhic ban on eating pork and shellfish. Only Mr. Foxbrunner's conclusion—that things having utilitarian explanations cannot represent

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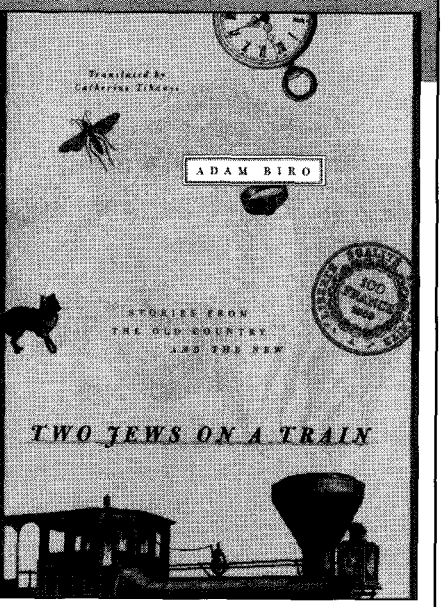

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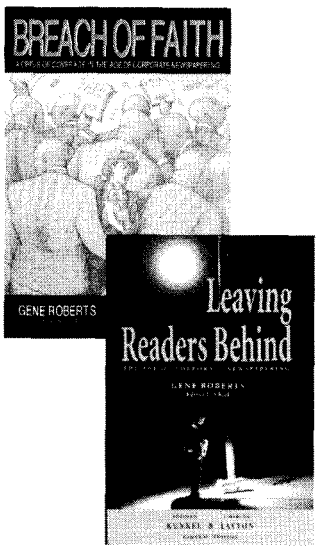

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"profound symbolic mysteries"—is false. The ability to see further than merely the literal or utilitarian meaning distinguishes the poetic from the prosaic worldview.

Mr. Foxbrunner's comparison of the Western Wall to the Qa'aba is especially painful—not just inherently, but insofar as it strongly recalls the Israeli architect Moshe Safdie's readily understandable outrage when the Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi proposed placing "a great black stone," resembling "the Qa'aba in Mecca," in the plaza in front of the Wall. Safdie held that Noguchi's plan was "preposterous, reflecting a total misunderstanding of Judaism."

The implied analogy between Wall and Qa'aba clearly struck Safdie as not quite right. For my purposes, the Wall is and the Qa'aba is not a "blank" (in the sense of "blank tablet," "blank paper," or "blank slate"). The Qa'aba is no "veil," no "screen," does not cut off your view, does not have a "far side" where there is nothing. It is an object you stroll around; you encompass it.

But the real issue is more general. Judaism has a million points of contact with other religions. It interprets such shared possessions in its own idiosyncratic way. You cannot read the objects of Judaism outside their Jewish context any more than you can read the Talmud without Rashi. The Babylonians had a flood story—whose meaning for them was nothing like the biblical story's meaning to Jews. The Hebrew Bible is embodied verbatim in the Christian scriptures. And so on.

Mr. Foxbrunner's second category of objection strikes me as irrefutable, not because it is right but because it is so far removed from plain logic that it is hard to know where to grab hold of it to toss it off the field. Do we discard Gershom Scholem's scholarship because we dislike many of his attitudes and opinions? I agree with Mr. Foxbrunner that they are often objectionable, but the idea strikes me as absurd on its face—by which I do not mean to imply that it has a head (I am not speaking literally). Does Mr. Foxbrunner's disagreement with me about the *melaveh malkah* mean that he knows more about Hasidism than I do, or has more direct personal experience with Hasidim? Would Nahmanides be "appalled"? The reader will have to judge for himself.

I agree with Arnold Flick: however much we admire and are moved by the great cathedrals (and I admire and am moved by them a lot), the Wall hints at the meaning of transcendence and stands as a kind of reproach to every cathedral-builder in history.

Music Technology

TO THE EDITOR:

Terry Teachout describes wonderful changes coming in the way we listen to music, all occasioned by the incredible increase in freedom and flexibility that listeners now have thanks to digital technology ["Why Listening Will Never Be the Same," September]. But his assessment may turn out to be over-optimistic. The music industry has grown comfortably fat by being able to force music lovers to pay for an entire CD to get two good songs.

From the moment the industry understood the threat posed by users' freedom to choose song by song or to move from one format to another, it has fought back with increasing fury, culminating in the Consumer Broadband and Digital Television Promotion Act currently before Congress. This bill would allow the Recording Industry Association of America and other representatives of the entertainment industry to hack directly into someone's home computer without a warrant, and to alter or delete files at will. It would also force electronics manufacturers to build their equipment in such a way that the transformation of the listening experience Mr. Teachout describes would be forbidden by law.

Those parts of the music industry addicted to controlling distribution threaten to create a world in which users never really own the music they pay for, and must listen to it on the industry's terms. I hope Mr. Teachout's vision prevails, but that will require a Congress that feels itself more beholden to citizens than to corporate donors.

CLAY SHIRKY
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Terry Teachout claims that, thanks to new computer technology, physical recordings and record stores will eventually disappear. But his conclusion is no more supported by the facts on the ground than was that of the wide-eyed "dot-comers" who, during the 1990's, predicted an end to "brick-and-mortar" retailing and print books.

Were Mr. Teachout to visit London, as I did recently, he would be amazed to find that vinyl LP's have made an amazing recovery. In the UK, vinyl has been outselling tape cassettes, pressing plants are back in operation, and one small manufacturer of turntables sold over 15,000 units last year, mostly to the under-thirty crowd. The same thing is going on in the U.S. as well, though it is happening under the radar of the mass market.

I am not suggesting that vinyl will replace CD's, but it is back. One reason is that young people enjoy the "thing" itself, and another is the sound. Vinyl sounds warm and comforting. It communicates the meaning of music as no MP3 file can. MP3's sound awful. They are like barely nourishing fast food: fine for music on the go, or to communicate the basics, but hardly satisfying in the long run.

McDonald's has not made gourmet eating disappear, and MP3's, digital downloads, and file-sharing will not make records and record stores disappear. Not this year, not next, not ever.

MICHAEL FREMER
Senior Contributing Editor
Stereophile
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Terry Teachout is right in identifying an orchestral score as less an art object than a set of instructions; but I think he errs in regarding recordings merely as a way of experiencing a work. The very concreteness of a record—whether it be a 78-rpm disc, LP, CD, or tape cassette—allows it to *become* the music. Without a doubt, MP3 file-sharing and computer transmission of music will shortly assume the importance and centrality Mr.

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Essays and Speeches

Leslie Dunbar

Introduction by Dan T. Carter

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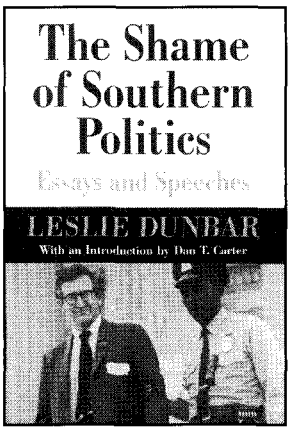

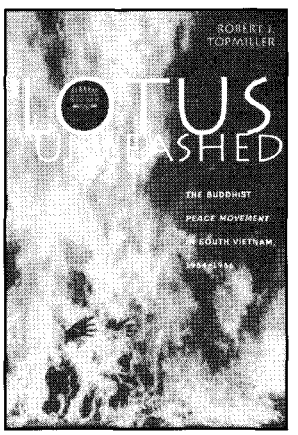

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Casualty of War

A Childhood Remembered

Luisa Lang Owen
Foreword by Charles M. Barber

In the wake of World War II, Yugoslavia purged its territory of the ethnic Germans who had formed a part of its human mosaic. Like thousands of others in the Danube Valley at the end of the war, Owen and her family were chased from their home. Nine years old when she entered a concentration camp in 1945, Owen survived the persecution of her people, eventually finding herself in America, where she made a new life for herself; a life that nonetheless held within it memories of the atrocities she had experienced in her homeland. Her haunting memoir provides a window into the ethnic cleansing that preceded the recent exterminations in Bosnia and Kosovo by fifty years. ". . . teaches us much about the resilience and promise of the human spirit."—James P. Scanlan, Ohio State University. 30 b&w photos. $34.95

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Teachout predicts. But just as e-mail has found its niche without supplanting either correspondence or conversation, the need for the music artifact will surely remain with us.

I also have to wonder whether Mr. Teachout is serious in suggesting that the power to resequence the selections of a given album has any value save that of indulging the idiosyncrasies of individuals who wish to assemble their own "greatest hits." We all like to hear our favorite music on long drives or flights, but I think it is a stretch to represent the sequencing of tunes on an album as a life-and-death struggle pitting free choice against the tyranny of record companies.

RICHARD M. SUDHALTER
Cutchogue, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Terry Teachout offers fascinating food for thought, but I have my doubts regarding a couple of his points. Just because technology makes it possible for millions of young people to download their favorite pop singles does not mean that the album as we know it is doomed. Those of us who make albums (as opposed to mere collections of singles) put a great deal of care into them, and will continue to do so. I, for one, do not want it left to listeners to decide on the sequencing and programming of my music. Some will do it anyway, but I reserve the right to produce the definitive packaging of my work. I would like to believe that more than a few listeners still appreciate that kind of care.

I also doubt that many musicians will want to start their own labels. Running even a small record company is an immensely time-consuming task—getting mechanical licenses, paying royalties, marketing, shipping, making sure you get paid, etc. Very few musicians who start their own labels stick with them for long. It is just too much effort, and it takes away from their raison d'être: performing. The Internet will eliminate a few of these difficulties, like dealing with distributors, but not most of them.

BILL KIRCHNER
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Having read many of Terry Teachout's articles over the years, I have gained a modicum of respect for his critical abilities. Imagine my amazement to discover that he is "rarely capable of telling the difference between an MP3 file and the original CD from which it has been ripped." MP3 files are *substantially* different from CD's in audio quality, due to the nature of the compression routines they use. The dynamic range of the CD is much greater, as is the total frequency response. Mr. Teachout's admission is akin to an art critic confessing color blindness.

LOUIS M. GALIE
Newtown, Connecticut

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

In the time since my piece in COMMENTARY appeared, American newspapers and magazines have carried a flood of stories in which recording executives left no doubt of their extreme anxiety about the effects of file-sharing and CD-burning on the music business. It seems increasingly likely that at least some record companies will soon launch new websites, or improve existing ones, from which computer users can download individual recordings at will for a nominal fee. Whether such sites can compete against free file-sharing sites based in other countries—and thus inaccessible to U.S. law enforcement—remains to be seen.

Significantly, as Clay Shirky points out, the recording industry also proposes to engage in unprecedentedly aggressive attempts to stop individual computer users from engaging in file-sharing. I think it highly unlikely that these attempts will succeed, but in the short term they may well create a false sense of security on the part of backward-thinking executives who long to return to the more stable economic environment of the recent past. These executives do not understand that the technological battle has already taken place, and that they have lost it.

Michael Fremer, who is an audiophile, is fighting a different war, one that was lost two decades ago. The reason why vinyl LP's are outselling audio cassettes in London is that the cassette—which was from its earliest days an inferior transitional technology—has been rendered definitively obsolete by the emergence of the CD, including now the recordable CD. The appeal of the LP is at bottom nostalgic (as Mr. Fremer himself unintentionally acknowledges when he observes that vinyl sounds "warm and comforting"). I am far from unsympathetic to those who feel the tug of this nostalgia, but it is a mistake to suppose that it will have any discernible effect on the music business of the 21st century, save among the tiniest possible minority of antique collectors.

Richard M. Sudhalter and Bill Kirchner are both noted jazz musicians and writers on music, and their view of the future, unlike Mr. Fremer's, may be right. My piece was a combination of reportage and speculation, and while some of the speculation has already been borne out by events, much of it as yet remains nothing more than a thought-experiment—an attempt to imagine the cultural consequences of a new technology. I feel confident that my view is clearer than theirs, but obviously only time will tell.

I am glad that Louis M. Galie has a modicum of respect for my critical abilities. That being the case, he might want to consider giving me the benefit of the doubt. MP3 files can be "compressed" to widely varying degrees, and, depending on the source material, the effect of this compression varies just as widely. An MP3 file of a digital recording of the Atlanta Symphony encoded at 128 kilobytes per second sounds different from one of a transfer of a King Cole Trio 78 encoded at 160 kilobytes per second.

To be sure, MP3 files are not for audiophiles, but then I am not an audiophile. I am a musician who listens to records for musical pleasure, and I have no great interest in sound quality for its own sake, though obviously I prefer good to bad. (When I want to hear *really* good sound, I go to a concert.) I am also in my mid-forties, and I don't hear quite as well as I did when I was in my mid-twenties. If that makes me the equivalent of a color-blind art critic, then there are

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a lot of other timbre-deaf music critics out there.

Environmentalist Manna

To the Editor:

In "The Mau-Mauing of Bjørn Lomborg" [September], David Schoenbrod identifies *Science* as a participant in what he calls the "wildly intemperate response of the key scientific journals." This claim is supported by his assertions that our review of Lomborg's book "bore the derisive title 'Manna from Heaven,'" and that "*Science* refused to publish any replies to its attack, not even a brief letter from Lomborg himself."

When we decided to review the book, *Science*'s book editor and I quickly decided to steer clear of the "usual suspects"—scientists who had staked out positions in the environmental debate. The review was written by a distinguished British atmospheric chemist; it was critical but fair. Its title referred explicitly to a strong difference the reviewer had with Lomborg's position that regulation has had little or nothing to do with environmental improvement. Thus, was it, instead, "Manna from Heaven"?

As to Lomborg's letter: it is a policy here that we almost never publish authors' complaints about reviews of their books, though we frequently get them. That is because we think our readers do not benefit from tedious exchanges between offenders and victims.

Donald Kennedy
Editor-in-Chief
Science
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor:

David Schoenbrod does a masterful job of summarizing the squalid attacks environmentalists have made against *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, and he rightly notes that environmentalists are upset because Bjørn Lomborg challenges their scientific authority. But he fails to carry his argument forward to explain that the point of their environmental "science" is to maintain their *moral* authority, which depends on the public perception of a perpetual environmental crisis. If the public came to see the environment as a normal problem rather than an apocalyptic one, the politics of the issue would change overnight; environmental activists would be regarded as just another special-interest group.

Lomborg poses a serious challenge to the few environmentalists who have any intellectual integrity, and has even helped to open some cracks in the environmental monolith. In the heat of a public debate with Lomborg last fall, Allen Hammond of the World Resources Institute, for example, felt compelled to say that Lester Brown, one of the leaders of modern environmentalism, was not in fact "a significant figure in advancing environmental concerns." Brown, it should be noted, has won both a MacArthur Foundation "genius" award and the UN Environment Prize, and has been described by the *Washington Post* as "one of the world's most influential thinkers." In a similar vein, Michael Grubb of Cambridge University, in his review of Lomborg's book in *Science*, wrote that, "To any professional, it is no news at all that the 1972 *Limits to Growth* study [issued by the Club of Rome] was mostly wrong or that Paul Ehrlich and Lester Brown have perennially exaggerated the problems of food supply." This may not be news for professionals in the field, but it *is* news for most of the media and the public, and this kind of admission is a significant breakthrough.

Steven F. Hayward
American Enterprise Institute
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor:

David Schoenbrod's article about Bjørn Lomborg's critics is a welcome comment on this episode of intellectual authoritarianism. The campaign against Lomborg that Mr. Schoenbrod surveys has been continued by John P. Holdren, an environmental scientist at Harvard who wrote one of the attacks on *The Skeptical Environmentalist* that appeared in *Scientific American*. After Lomborg responded to the essay, Holdren penned a second attack for the magazine's website. It concludes with the following:

> Lomborg's performance careens far across the line that divides respectable (even if controversial) science from thoroughgoing and unrepentant incompetence. He has failed thoroughly to master his subject. He has committed, with appalling frequency and brazen abandon, exactly the kinds of mistakes and misrepresentations of which he accuses his adversaries. He has needlessly muddled public understanding and wasted immense amounts of the time of capable people who have had to take on the task of rebutting him. . . . It is a lot to answer for.

The irony is that Holdren himself, as an environmental polemicist, has been wrong time and again regarding resource depletion, pollution abatement, energy reliability, and the threat of climate change. Among other things, Holdren, along with the Stanford biologist Paul Ehrlich, lost a widely publicized bet with the late Julian Simon about the likely course of natural-resource prices. Holdren's own track record leaves even less reason for him to lose his intellectual composure in the heat of debate with an able adversary.

Robert L. Bradley, Jr.
Institute for Energy Research
Houston, Texas

To the Editor:

David Schoenbrod's article was wonderful—a model of dispassionate, careful, and thoughtful writing. I was astonished by the low road taken by the editors of *Scientific American* and other periodicals. I had thought that political correctness was reserved for the professors of the soft sciences. That it has crossed over to the hard sciences is alarming.

Mr. Schoenbrod notes that the shifting of funds from compliance with the Kyoto Protocol on global warming to simpler and far less costly environmental improvements would save millions of lives. But he mercifully spares the environmentalists by letting a prime reason for their lack of interest go unmentioned. It is a tenet of the movement that there are already too many people on the planet and that environ-

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mental steps to prolong or increase human life are counterproductive.

PAUL G. MARSHALL
Morristown, New Jersey

DAVID SCHOENBROD writes:

The mau-mauing of Bjørn Lomborg goes on. Twelve prestigious scientists served a writ on his publisher, Cambridge University Press, demanding that it cease printing *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, hand the book over to a nonacademic press, and convene a tribunal to investigate its errors. They do not suggest that their own writings be subjected to any such investigation—although, as my correspondent Robert L. Bradley correctly notes, many of Lomborg's opponents are hardly in a position to be throwing stones. In Denmark, meanwhile, the anti-Lomborg brigade has demanded that he be brought up on official charges of scientific dishonesty.

Donald Kennedy protests that *Science*, for its part, tried to be fair. The journal does deserve credit for picking, in Michael Grubb, an eminent reviewer who himself tried to be fair. In his review, Grubb acknowledged Lomborg's "compelling" case for the proposition that "in many respects the environment is getting better rather than worse." Where Grubb went astray was precisely in asserting that Lomborg would prefer to rely on environmental improvement coming of its own accord without government intervention. It is true that at one point Lomborg cites studies suggesting that some of the environmental improvement popularly ascribed to regulation has actually come from other sources, but this is hardly tantamount to being against regulation altogether. In his introductory chapter, Lomborg makes crystal clear that government has a role to play:

> Pointing out that our most publicized fears are incorrect does not mean that we should make no effort toward improving the environment. Far from it. . . . What this information should tell us is not to abandon action entirely, but to focus our attention on the most important problems and only to the extent warranted by the facts.

Grubb's error here was critical because it gave rise to the review's derisive and damaging—and inaccurate—title, "Manna from Heaven."

In any case, my quarrel is not with Grubb but with Mr. Kennedy, who then declined to print Lomborg's half-page letter pointing out Grubb's error. Mr. Kennedy justifies this refusal on the basis of policy: "we almost never publish authors' complaints about reviews of their books." The policy is of course of his own making; other publications, including the *New York Review of Books* and COMMENTARY, have no such policy. Nor can space have been a consideration: *Science* prints over 200 letters annually, and according to its website it publishes additional letters in its online edition.

Mr. Kennedy writes that the real reason had to do with sparing his readers "tedious exchanges between offenders and victims." The reaction to Lomborg's book can be characterized in many ways, but tedium is the last quality one would associate with it; surely the readers of *Science* would have found much interest in an exchange between this upstart author and the eminent Michael Grubb. Besides, "almost never" implies sometimes, and if ever there was a sometime, this was it.

In my article I took pains to point out that *Scientific American* and *Nature* were far more egregious in their partisan pursuit of Lomborg than was *Science*. It is still not too late for Mr. Kennedy to make amends, and thereby distinguish his publication once again from those others.

My thanks to Steven F. Hayward and Paul G. Marshall for their generous comments.

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CONTROVERSY

Modernizing Islam

Francis Fukuyama and Nadav Samin & Critics

MARTIN KRAMER:

What happens when a really big reality (like 9/11) collides head-on with a really big idea (like Francis Fukuyama's "end of history")? Inevitably, the idea crumples to absorb the shock. Let us survey the wreckage.

In "Can Any Good Come of Radical Islam?" [September], Mr. Fukuyama and his co-author Nadav Samin concur that Islamism is a destructive force that warrants comparison with Communism and fascism. But, they write, it might also be a modernizing one—it might, despite itself, strip away the traditional constraints that have prevented Muslims from modernizing. And if Islamism, in turn, can be stripped of its ideology, then perhaps it might turn out to be a blessing in disguise.

If. And if only. In Francis Fukuyama, Hegel springs eternal, and it was Hegel who passed this judgment early in the 19th century: "Islam has long vanished from the stage of history, and has retreated into oriental ease and repose." The persistent refusal of Islam to do just that remains one of the principal flaws of "endism," from Hegel to this day—that is, for as long as the modern West has rubbed shoulders with Islam.

After some two centuries, the evidence is compelling. Islam has been an inexhaustible power cell for scores of movements that have defied the values of modern liberalism. From Mahdism to bin Ladenism, from the Muslim Brotherhood to the Taliban, Islam continues to generate new and potent antidotes to the infection of the West. All of which suggests that the power of radical Islam (like Islam itself) is its ability to mutate—to adapt itself to ever-changing circumstances. Today it ingeniously exploits the very modernism that it seeks to thwart. Just when you think it is outmoded—as many analysts thought 30 years ago—it suddenly reappears in some completely new (and often more virulent) form.

Radical Islam, Messrs. Fukuyama and Samin speculate, "may yet help pave the way for long-overdue reform. If so, this would certainly not be the first time that the cunning of history has produced so astounding a result." In theory, of course, Islam might be reformed into irrelevance. The late Ernest Gellner even opined that while Islam "did not engender the modern world, it may yet, of all the faiths, turn out to be the one best adapted to it."

The problem is that in actual practice, real Muslims have treated their would-be reformers very shabbily; the space between Islamism and the authoritarian state remains a leaderless void, which neither side has an interest in filling. The reformers, who have always been a small minority, are today even worse off than they were a half-century ago: today, terrorists threaten to kill them. By all means, let us pray five times daily for an Islamic Reformation. But let us admit that there is no Luther in sight who could inspire one.

The danger of the Fukuyama-Samin argument is that it could encourage complacency. They really do not come down very far from the starry-eyed Middle East experts. One recalls in particular the Georgetown political scientist Michael Hudson, who once told a congressional committee that "whatever the ultimate intent of Islamist move-

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ments, their current function is a liberalizing one." Messrs. Fukuyama and Samin would just switch the adjectives around: whatever the *current* intent of Islamist movements, their *ultimate* function is a liberalizing one. It is a short distance from this point to the argument that we should welcome Islamist seizures of power, so as to speed up the inevitable process of regeneration.

As for the authors' idea that Islamist "independent action" might "lay the groundwork of a true civil society," this sounds precisely like the argument of John Esposito and a raft of "experts" who tell us that we should weigh the good social deeds of groups like Hamas. Only in the absence of any other mediating institutions can this illusion be maintained. Islamism is a poor man's civil society, and a poor substitute for it, since it lacks a concept of tolerance. There is no evidence it can develop further, and ample evidence suggesting that it cannot.

In any case, the Fukuyama-Samin thesis cannot be proved or disproved in any near term, and it is pointless to debate it. Its policy implications are vague at best. And it does not change the fact that at this moment in time, it is not Islamism but "endism" that (to quote Hegel) has "vanished from the stage of history"—even if it has cropped up in the pages of COMMENTARY.

Middle East Quarterly
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

WALID PHARES:

Francis Fukuyama and Nadav Samin's stimulating article is an attempt to integrate Osama bin Laden's movement into the global current of modernization. If not a modernizing force itself, they suggest, Islamism is at least playing the role of a cultural bulldozer, clearing the way for liberalism by undermining the traditional institutions of Muslim society.

It is an attractive interpretation, not least because it confines the Islamists within the narrative of liberalism's progress. But we should not be deceived by what we think Islamism "should" be. Islamists may be displacing post-Ottoman traditionalists to some degree, but they are not a modernist movement paving the way to liberal democracy. Islamism has indeed borrowed ideas and techniques from fascism and Communism, as the authors note, but while the totalitarians of the West decimated their predecessors to establish what they believed to be a better modernity, the Islamists aim to establish an even more traditional society than the one they are removing. We may see mullahs online and al Qaeda pilots, but their sophistication is just a leap in technology, not a burst of modernization. They seek to bury modernity with its own weapons.

As evidence that Islamism is directed against traditional Islam and can "accommodate Western norms," Messrs. Fukuyama and Samin cite the examples of women voting in Iran and the Islamist charities of Egypt, which, they write, "might yet help lay the groundwork of a true civil society." It is dangerous, however, to view the evolution of Islamism through this liberal lens. Yes, the Shiite fundamentalists granted voting power to Iranian women—but in exchange for withdrawing their social rights. As for Egypt's Islamist charities, far from being a Muslim version of the Lions Club or the PTA, they are tools for de-secularizing society and making it an extension of the Islamic state to come.

Messrs. Fukuyama and Samin also overstate the extent of the Islamists' break with Islamic tradition and authority. The idea of sacrificing oneself for the *umma* (community) of believers is as old as conquering Islam itself. The concept of *inghimas fil adu*—throwing oneself into the midst of the enemy with the knowledge that one's own death will ensue—was born thirteen centuries ago. Today's suicide missions differ only in their technological means. As for Osama bin Laden supposedly arrogating religious authority to himself by issuing *fatwa*s, Messrs. Fukuyama and Samin get their facts wrong. Bin Laden has been very careful in his theological behavior, and has clearly stated in interviews on al-Jazeera that he requested the decrees "from a number of sheiks and muftis."

Had Islamism not appeared in the 19th and 20th centuries, Muslim communities worldwide might now be emulating the political and economic reforms of Latin America and South Asia. What really "went wrong" in the Muslim world was the sneak attack by the jihadists into the center of their own civilization. Muslim nationalists, constitutional monarchists, Marxists, and liberals moved the prospects for development slightly forward in the post-Ottoman world; radical Islam has caused these societies to take two steps backward. The Islamists are not moving from jihad to modernity, as Messrs. Fukuyama and Samin suggest; they are simply modernizing jihad.

Florida Atlantic University
Boca Raton, Florida

STANLEY N. KURTZ:

Although Francis Fukuyama and Nadav Samin begin their article by acknowledging that it would be foolish to downplay religious or cultural factors in analyzing Islamism, they proceed to do exactly that. They are right, no doubt, that Islamists have borrowed some of the language and techniques of European fascism, especially with respect to the role of charismatic leadership. These ideas have succeeded, however, because they already had a certain force in Islam. Osama bin Laden may not be a traditional religious leader, but his issuing of a *fatwa* is vastly different from their hypothetical example of "Hitler issuing a papal encyclical."

Similarly, suicide bombing may bear some small resemblance, as Messrs. Fukuyama and Samin sug-

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gest, to the "aestheticization of death" that one finds in European totalitarianism, but it emerges from a distinctive Islamic context. It embodies an ethos of personal sacrifice that is characteristically cultivated in societies bound by complex networks of kinship and collective honor. Such networks were of limited importance to late-19th-century European peasants even before they were thrown into anomic urban slums. Muslim peasants, by contrast, are even now bound together tightly by such ties and, to a surprising degree, retain them after their arrival in big cities. The authors fail to see these key differences between the sociology of fascism and the sociology of Islamism. As for ideology, they are mistaken to compare the Nazis' supposed resuscitation of pre-Christian "Aryan" traditions—a completely imaginary exercise—with the profound continuity between traditional Islam and contemporary Islamism.

Modernity has brought about real and significant changes in Islam, but this does not mean that Islamism is best understood as a modern totalitarian ideology. Indeed, Messrs. Fukuyama and Samin's conclusion is not only at odds with the facts but also undercuts their chief policy prescription. They want to give immediate encouragement to genuinely liberal, Western-oriented Muslims, but their analysis suggests that authentic modernization will only come to the Islamic world in the long term.

This seeming resignation about the prospects for Islamic societies also points to a problem with Mr. Fukuyama's famous thesis, in "The End of History?" (1989), that the world is moving inexorably toward liberal democracy. By conceding that modernization among Muslims is far in the future, Mr. Fukuyama implies a measure of agreement with one of his key critics, Samuel Huntington, who argued—presciently, many believe—that the end of the cold war would bring about a "clash of civilizations" based on religion and culture. Huntington has advised restraint in America's efforts to spread democracy.

Huntington was right about the sources of our current conflict, but he failed to take account of technological advance, especially with respect to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. This has made it much more difficult for America to tolerate undemocratic regimes based on non- or anti-Western cultural assumptions. Mr. Fukuyama, for his part, did not foresee this particular turn of the wheel, but he has long argued that the "mechanism of modern natural science" would bring about global democracy.

The question we face today, and which neither thinker has fully addressed, is what will happen when the irresistible force of Western conquest and democratization bangs up against the immovable object of Islamic social and cultural tradition.

The Hoover Institution
Washington, D.C.

LARRY DIAMOND:

Francis Fukuyama and Nadav Samin are right to question the conventional wisdom about radical Islam. It is a new "ism"—less a religious movement than a totalitarian ideology. As such, it bears an important kinship with fascism and Communism, and it risks being no less destructive. But Messrs. Fukuyama and Samin are only partly right to attribute the rise of radical Islamism—and its frequent embrace by intellectuals—to the "rapid social dislocation" that Muslim societies have experienced over the last several decades.

The alienation felt by radical Islamists has also been powerfully fed by a diffuse sense of national and cultural humiliation. When these armchair-ideologues-turned-revolutionaries look at their own societies, they see failure—poverty, inequality, endemic corruption, political repression—especially as compared with the prosperity of Europe and America. Throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds, decadent, self-interested ruling elites have delivered neither economic growth—unemployment is now high even in Saudi Arabia—nor legitimate mechanisms for electoral participation, thus depriving their people of the means to express their grievances peacefully.

In these circumstances, it is not hard to understand the allure of all-encompassing ideologies that promise to lift Muslim societies out of their deep rut. Nationalism and socialism were tried, and both failed. Only two alternatives remain—radical Islam and liberal democracy. It is a powerful testimony to how greatly Muslim rulers fear the latter that they have preferred to toy with and use the former.

But Messrs. Fukuyama and Samin are mistaken to suggest that radical Islamism itself contributes to political and economic development. It may leave a path of destruction and level the field for an eventual liberal alternative, but at what cost? The Islamic republic of Iran is no model of progress. The mullahs have robbed and oppressed Iranian society while failing to deal with any of the country's most pressing problems.

Islamism can only foster progress if it is stripped of its radicalism, its impulse to hegemony and intolerance, and becomes a competitor for power within a pluralistic, democratic framework. This process may be under way already in Turkey, where the Islamist Justice and Development party—whose record is encouraging in certain respects—swept the November elections. Islamic radicalism may also perform a historical service if, like the Communist threat to Korea and Taiwan, it forces ruling elites to develop effective and accountable governance, and ultimately democracy, in order to save themselves from an existential threat.

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But if these regimes react with their usual myopia, simply repressing the radical dissidents, and if the U.S. makes the mistake, as it frequently did during the cold war, of backing the lesser of two evils, Islamic radicalism will prove to have done no good at all. Indeed, we will find ourselves facing more angry, humiliated young men who, looking for an explanation of their own societies' failures, turn to terrorism against the West in a vain attempt at vengeance.

The Hoover Institution
Stanford, California

JOAKIM FÖRARS:

Francis Fukuyama and Nadav Samin argue that, like fascism and Communism, Islamism has left a disastrous record wherever it has come to power. Hence, in the short run, a backlash in the Muslim world is quite possible, especially if the Islamists are discredited by an American military grand slam. In the long run, they suggest, liberal Islam may be able to fill the void.

There are many problems with this analysis. As a military matter, it is perhaps sufficient to say that Israel has defeated the Arabs several times, but has reaped only more fanaticism and renewed efforts at revenge. An American counterattack against radical Islamic terrorism is no doubt the only constructive way of facing this threat, but it will hardly destroy a popular movement that permeates the Arab world. It is misleading to compare American warfare in the Middle East with the crushing of the Axis powers in World War II.

Nor are we likely to find a solution to Islamism in the rise of civil society or even of full-fledged democracy in the Muslim world. The Arabs of Israel were offered just this, and seemed to be pacified for a time. But now, awakened by their Palestinian brothers, they have turned into a fifth column in Israel, increasingly joining ranks with the enemy.

Finally, and most seriously, Messrs. Fukuyama and Samin's preoccupation with sociological explanations makes them understate the genuine religious inspiration of radical Islamism. True, a quest for identity, awakened by modernization, has cultivated the religious impulse. But the simple fact is that Islamists find legitimacy for extremism in the words and deeds of the Prophet. The glorification of violence and heinous warfare against allegedly dangerous or dishonest infidels cannot be explained away by claiming that words from the Qur'an and the Hadith have been taken out of context.

Åbo Academy University
Åbo, Finland

SCOTT RAVEDE:

The historical premises of Francis Fukuyama and Nadav Samin's article are as invalid as their conclusions. It is absurd to suggest that Hitler made liberal democracy possible in Germany, when he was responsible for its destruction, or that the Bolsheviks industrialized and urbanized Russia, when they were responsible for 70 years of economic stagnation. Is this what they want radical Islam to accomplish for the Muslim world?

DeBary, Florida

Francis Fukuyama & Nadav Samin

Martin Kramer and Walid Phares are both correct to suggest that Islamism represents a profoundly illiberal impulse that has proved highly adaptable to modern circumstances and has constituted a significant barrier to political and economic development in the Muslim world. The deeper question, then, is whether this tendency arises ineluctably from within the heart of Islam itself, as Messrs. Kramer, Phares, Kurtz, and Förars suggest in different ways, or whether, as Larry Diamond argues, it has fed on more proximate causes like the lack of political opportunity in the Arab world. If it is the former, then no liberal future will ever be possible for the Muslim world.

There is of course no way to answer this question definitively, though we obviously tend to agree with Mr. Diamond that the causes are more likely to be proximate. To view radical Islamism as the inevitable expression of the teachings of Islam is to accept the supremely unnuanced reality of its proponents. One then needs to explain, for instance, why there were long stretches of latitudinarianism under the Ottomans, or why early Muslim military leaders had to expend so much effort persuading people to sacrifice themselves, or how modern Turkey came to be.

The inconsistencies do not end there. Within the 20th century alone, three great political trends have swept the Muslim world. First came the authoritarian, Westernizing modernism of Ataturk and Reza Shah, followed by the secular nationalism of Nasser and the Baathists, followed by the religious radicalism of Khomeini and bin Laden. Each represented a response to the failures of the preceding wave, and the burden should be on our critics to show why only the third and last trend is somehow the most genuine or durable expression of the aspirations of Muslims more generally.

No one ever starts out being a liberal. Western liberalism was not an automatic byproduct of Western civilization or of the Judeo-Christian tradition. It emerged out of the violent sectarian warfare that engulfed Europe in the 150 years following the Reformation, and the general recognition that religiously based politics could not provide a minimum degree of security and order. It was also a necessary condition for the economic modernization of Europe. If the Muslim world wants civil peace and development, secular politics will be a functional necessity there as well. The question is whether this

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process can unfold in a more compressed time scale, and without simultaneously engulfing the rest of the world in its internal violence. In one way or another, Islamic liberalism, though abducted from the incubator, may well emerge in terms not so unfamiliar to us.

No one knows whether this will in fact happen, but there is some reason to expect that the political wheel will turn again. While Islamism may be a highly effective tool of political mobilization, it has been a disaster as a governing ideology in the three countries where it has come to power: Iran, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia. None of our respondents save Larry Diamond has acknowledged the real prospects for liberalization present in a country like Iran that has had to endure Islamist theocracy—the backlash to the backlash, so to speak.

Conversely, if Islamism feeds off of the political pathologies described by Mr. Diamond, there is reason to think that, even absent a Muslim Luther, a different kind of Arab politics will engender a different kind of opposition. Contrary to Joakim Förars, we do not think that this movement can be defeated by military means alone; it must be combated on all levels, ideologically and politically as well as militarily, and by addressing the background conditions under which it is bred.

Walid Phares states that bin Laden has requested affirmation of his *fatwa* "from a number of sheiks and muftis." But surely Mr. Phares is aware that bin Laden was stripped of his Saudi citizenship and officially disowned by his family long before the September 11, 2001 strikes ever occurred. State-sanctioned Islamic orthodoxy, the dominant form throughout most of Islamic history, has never endorsed the sorts of interpretations put forth by bin Laden in support of his terrorism. It is not a coincidence that the principal ideological prop of the neo-Wahhabi movement is the theology of ibn Taymiya, the 14th-century Hanbali scholar who was considered a marginal thinker and a deviant by the majority of his contemporaries.

Finally, we were of course careful not to suggest that any society would be better off taking a detour through fascism, Communism, or Islamism as a preferred route to modernity. But in point of fact the first two movements did have some modernizing effects. *Pace* Scott Ravede, a combination of Hitler and the Communists succeeded in finishing off the German aristocracy that had been the traditional prop for authoritarianism in that country. Germany since the war has been in many ways less class-stratified than Britain, which did not undergo the same ruthless clearing of the decks. But it goes without saying that we would not wish the experience of 20th-century Germany on anyone.

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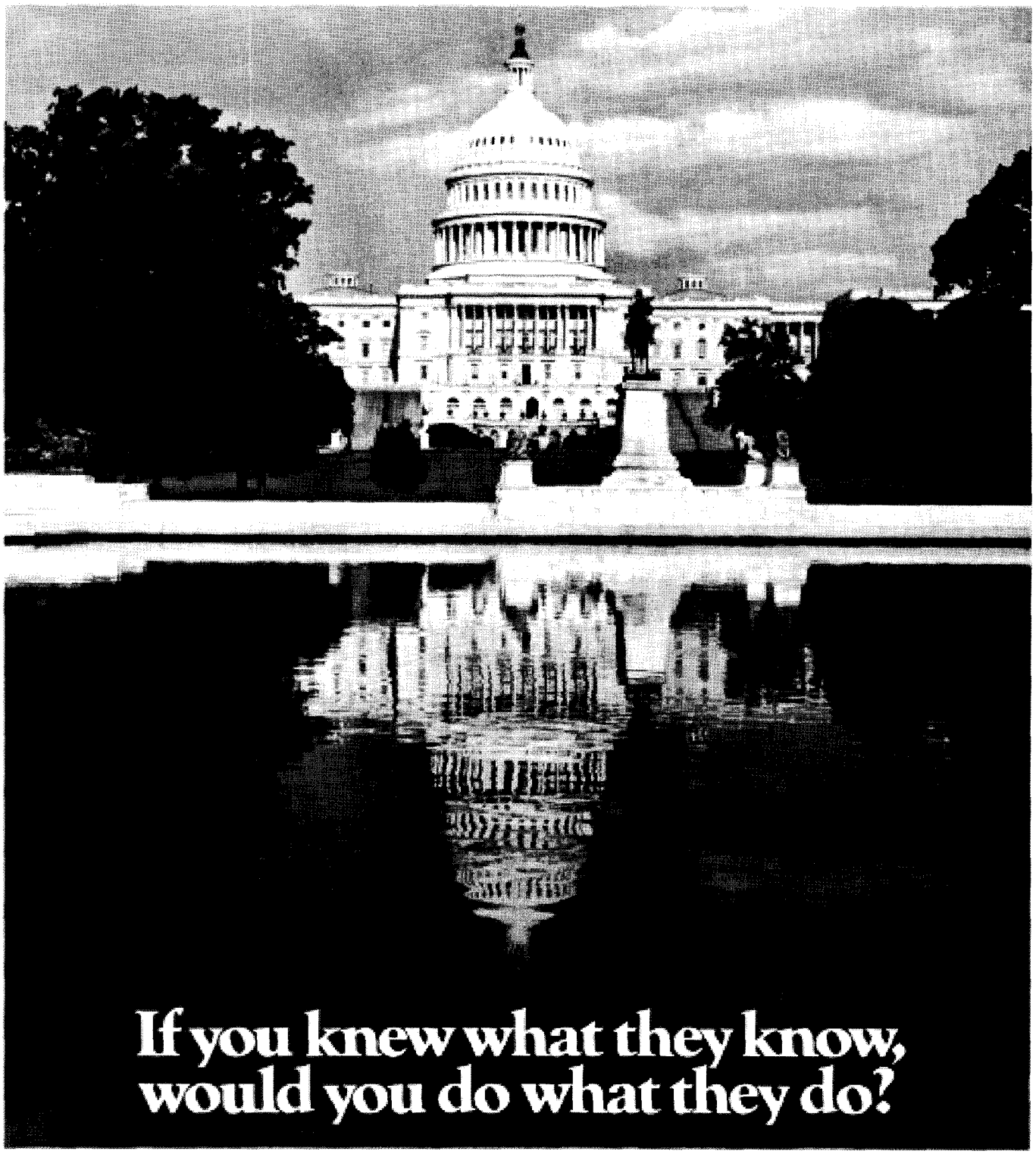

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Commentary
December 2002

The Bush Manifesto

Joshua Muravchik

THE "NATIONAL Security Strategy of the United States" is a document that usually passes unnoticed. Commenting on the most ambitious one produced during the eight years of Bill Clinton's presidency, William Safire quipped that it "has been kept secret by the fiendishly clever device of making it public." In truth, these reports, which are supposed to be issued annually, and in the name of the President, are always made public and almost always ignored. Some of them have been written in the third person, suggesting that not even the document's putative author has read it.

It was thus a dramatic change when, this fall, George W. Bush's first strategy statement provoked front-page headlines and incited a rash of greatly alarmed reactions at home and abroad. "Pugnacious," "arrogant," "sure to make the rest of the world uneasy," lamented the *New York Times*. "A call for . . . imperialism," protested Senator Edward Kennedy. "An implicit . . . denunciation of the modern state order," warned the columnist William Pfaff in the *International Herald Tribune*, who also likened the supposed revolutionary destructiveness of Bush's work to the *Communist Manifesto*.

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What made this document so different from its predecessors was not only its content but its context. Earlier annual reports, the mandate for which had been enacted in 1986 just as the cold war was winding down, were usually empty exercises because, in the absence of a crystallized threat, "strategic planning" was itself hopelessly vague. But now, in the wake of the attacks of September 11, the President had proclaimed the nation to be at war with terrorism, and this document represented the fullest statement yet of his approach to that war.

In this respect if in few others, the new strategy could be said to bear some resemblance to America's last grand strategy, "containment," which likewise developed more in practice than in abstraction. In the late 1940's, as Communists seized Poland and Czechoslovakia and grasped for Greece and Turkey, the United States came to realize that it faced a profound underlying danger. That danger was Soviet expansionism, and "containment" was our response to it. Similarly, George W. Bush concluded that the events of September 11 were but one terrible instance of a larger peril, and what he was now offering was a plan, however rough, for confronting it in its full dimension.

Indeed, it was Bush's insistence on this broad approach that aroused most of the controversy. Few Americans or Europeans may have doubted the need to combat terrorism or the organization called al Qaeda, and most proved willing to coun-

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tenance our attack on al Qaeda's Taliban sponsors. But in speeches over the intervening months, Bush's invocation of an "axis of evil," his espousal of "regime change" in Iraq, his warning that each nation must choose which side it was on in the war against terror—all this had struck some Americans and most Europeans as too sweeping or too aggressive. Now, this ambitious plan for confronting a peril that according to Bush lay "at the crossroads of radicalism and technology" seemed to confirm their worst fears.

THE STRATEGY as presented articulates three goals: to "defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants, . . . preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers, . . . [and] extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent."

Explaining the first goal—why terrorists must be fought, and can no longer be viewed by us as a marginal phenomenon—the document asserts that whereas "enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America," today "shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank." While homeland defense is necessary, "our best defense is a good offense." This is the reason America is waging "war against terrorists of global reach."

Since the terrorists' "shadowy networks" batten on support from governments, the document also repeats more than once Bush's earlier insistence that "we make no distinction between terrorists and those who knowingly harbor or provide aid to them." Among the now familiar checklist of tools that can be used against terrorism, including "law enforcement, intelligence, and vigorous efforts to cut off terrorist financing," it lays stress on two: "wag[ing] a war of ideas" and military force. The latter embraces, pointedly, the "exercise [of] our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against . . . terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country." Ideally such action will be taken in concert with partners, but "we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary."

Dire though the terrorist threat is, it does not rise to the level of the threat once posed by the Soviet Union. The President's second stated goal—preserving the peace—aims at averting a recurrence of precisely that kind of danger. "Today," the report asserts, "the international community has the best chance since the rise of the nation-state in the 17th century to build a world where great powers compete in peace instead of continually prepare for war." Of course, such ideals have often been voiced before, ordinarily as a vision of the distant day when lions will lie down with lambs. Bush, however, treats this as a practical goal, thereby giving the first glimpse of the unlikely radicalism of his whole approach.

To fulfill this vision, Bush proposes to work toward ever more friendly relations with Russia and China. As against those who believe that China is likely to emerge as a key American rival, the document states that "We welcome the emergence of a strong, peaceful, and prosperous China." At the same time, it affirms the need for China to democratize, and proclaims "our commitment to the self-defense of Taiwan."

But the goal of preserving a world without great-power conflict also entails a harder edge: namely, maintaining America's military supremacy. Bush's statement vows that "our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States."

In expounding the third goal of Bush's strategy—extending the peace—the statement draws from the experience of the 20th century the lesson that there is only "a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise." Accordingly, Bush promises to "make freedom and the development of democratic institutions key themes in our bilateral relations" and to "speak out honestly about violations of the non-negotiable demands of human dignity." Toward that end he proposes a 50-percent increase in U.S. "core development assistance"—that is, foreign aid—directed to "countries whose governments rule justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom."

The document also contains the usual potpourri of pledges: to modernize our military, promote free trade, and defuse regional conflicts. But the essence of the strategy lies in the three goals I have described, and it is these that have been the focus of controversy. Or rather the first two have drawn attack, while the third, which constitutes the most important and most ambitious component of the strategy, has been relatively ignored.

THE MOST intense controversy has surrounded the issue of preemptive war. In the statement itself, Bush's defense of the legitimacy of preemption serves to buttress the case for going to war specifically to oust Saddam Hussein. But as former Vice President Al Gore pointed out in a much publicized rejoinder to the document, "the existing

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[UN] resolutions from 1991 are sufficient from a legal standpoint" to justify resuming hostilities with Iraq. Why, then, did Bush grasp this hot potato?

Probably the answer is that he wanted to lay out something more than a narrow legal argument for going to war. He wanted an argument that appealed, as he put it, to "common sense." It was not only Saddam Hussein's violation of UN Security Council resolutions that justified the risks and costs of war; it was the terrifying danger he would pose if armed with nuclear weapons. In addition, the President may have wanted to underline the earnestness of his own repeated assertions that we are not after any one state or group but rather have in our sights the entire global network of terrorists and their sponsors.

Three main objections have been raised to Bush's doctrine of preemption in this larger context. The first is that it is open-ended. If the United States claims the right to attack Iraq today, whom will it turn on tomorrow? Bush's strategy, reported *Time*, "argues that the strongest nation in the world has the right to preemptively attack anyone who seeks to harm its people or interests."

The second objection, less jaundiced in its view of American aims, concentrates not so much on the temptation to inaugurate wars hither and yon as on the precedent we may be establishing for others—a precedent only too open to exploitation by less scrupulous states. Thus, a Brookings Institution analysis raised the troubling prospect that "other countries will embrace the preemption argument as a cover for settling their own national-security scores."

The third objection is that the policy of preemption will shred the fabric of international law. "What this doctrine does," said Gore, "is to destroy the goal of a world in which states consider themselves subject to law."

All three objections are debatable, if not downright specious. The first simply misrepresents the statement. Contrary to *Time*, and contrary to Gore's plaint that Bush has arrogated to himself the "right to preemptively attack whomsoever he may deem represents a potential future threat," the document makes plain that the policy of preemption is aimed at terrorists and "rogue states" alone. The latter term, coined in the Clinton administration, is here given precise definition perhaps for the first time.

Rogue states, says the strategy paper, have a number of identifiable characteristics. They

> brutalize their own people and squander their national resources for the personal gain of the rulers; display no regard for international law, threaten their neighbors, and callously violate international treaties to which they are party; are determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction, along with other advanced military technology, to be used as threats or offensively to achieve the[ir] aggressive designs; sponsor terrorism around the globe; and reject basic human values and hate the United States and everything for which it stands.

This is a definition that would readily apply to the three members of Bush's "axis of evil," and perhaps to Muammar Qaddafi's Libya—but to few, if any, others. One might challenge aspects of the enumerated criteria, but the claim that Bush has sought an unlimited writ for preemptive action is nonsense.

More reasonable is the fear that others might borrow the doctrine of preemption for their own, less savory purposes. Some states, no doubt, will try to do precisely that. But (to anticipate somewhat the third objection) there is less cause for alarm here than meets the eye, for the fear rests on the assumption that international law acts as a substantial barrier to misbehavior by states. In truth, international law is not self-enforcing, and serves as a barrier only insofar as states, meaning usually the United States, are willing to enforce it. In practice, miscreant nations routinely cloak their actions in spurious claims of self-defense or of other rights enshrined in law. It is not the cleverness of their arguments but rather the willingness of others to bear the burdens of counteracting them that determines what they will get away with.

To say, however, that international law is not self-enforcing and that its enforcement depends largely on the United States is not to say that international law is of no value to the United States. On the contrary, if all nations lived up to the law, the achievement of America's major international objectives—peace, human rights, fair commerce—would be assured. Since many do not live up to it, our success depends on our own power. But the law affords us a recognized and objective standard for exercising that power. Granted, it may present a constraint on our freedom of action, but that is a price worth paying for the legitimacy it confers on the most important objectives of our policy.

For this reason, the complaint that Bush's doctrine of preemption traduces international law is the most serious charge laid against it. But is it well founded? Bush's statement does not strike a posture that places America above the law, as some critics

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have suggested. To the contrary, it seeks to embed the new doctrine in established legal traditions. "For centuries," it asserts, "international law [has] recognized that nations need not suffer an attack before they can lawfully take action to defend themselves." And it continues: "We must adapt [this] concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today's adversaries." Those capabilities include weapons of mass destruction that can be "easily concealed, delivered covertly, and used without warning."

In this, Bush is on strong legal ground. The issue of preemption is as old as international law itself. Hugo Grotius, the 17th-century Dutch political philosopher who first formulated the idea of international law, asserted the legality of "kill[ing] him who is preparing to kill." Emmerich de Vattel, the second most important name in the early development of international law, explained further:

> A nation has the right to resist the injury that another seeks to inflict upon it, and to use force . . . against the aggressor. It may even anticipate the other's design, being careful, however, not to act upon vague and doubtful suspicions, lest it should run the risk of becoming itself the aggressor.*

The right of self-defense was asserted by the U.S. government in the course of the negotiation of the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 in such absolute terms as to encompass preemptive self-defense as well. The State Department then declared:

> The right to self-defense . . . is inherent in every sovereign state and implicit in every treaty. Every nation is free at all times and regardless of treaty provisions to defend its territory from attack or invasion and it alone is competent to decide whether circumstances require recourse to war in self-defense.

As the State Department also acknowledged, such a broad understanding might well mean that what one state would claim as self-defense would be called aggression by another. There was no solution to this, it said, except that the state whose claim was well-founded would be accorded the general sympathy of the rest of the world.

The United Nations was created in order to move the world beyond a situation in which victims had no recourse but "self-help" to one in which all states could rely upon a global structure of peace. This would be made up of the rules and procedures enumerated in chapter seven of the UN Charter, whose enforcement is the principal responsibility of the Security Council. But it was hardly expected that states would simultaneously give up their prior rights. As the relevant sentence reads: "Nothing in the present charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security."

True, this wording left some mystery as to whether the "inherent right" of self-defense would be "impaired" in cases other than when an armed attack had already taken place, such as in the face of a *threat* of attack. Perhaps the clearest test of this very issue occurred in 1967, when the Arab states sought a Security Council condemnation of Israel's preemptive strikes that inaugurated the Six-Day war. The Security Council rebuffed the Arab motion, and so did the General Assembly, which had not yet then become the Charlie McCarthy of the Arab caucus that it is today. In other words, the UN did not judge Israel's first strike to have been illegal.

LEGAL NICETIES aside, common sense likewise tells us that the right of self-defense cannot be compromised by the adoption of the UN Charter, if only because chapter seven has, in sad reality, proved to be a dead letter. It envisions a UN general staff and a commitment of substantial military resources by all member states to a mighty international force, to be deployed as needed by the Security Council in order to enforce the peace. In practice, the UN has managed to fulfill this role exactly twice in its history: in Korea in 1950 and in the Persian Gulf in 1991. Both were unusual moments of Security Council comity not readily replicated (in the former case, the U.S. was able to take advantage of the fact that the Soviet delegate was boycotting the session). And in both cases, the assembled military forces, although they flew a UN flag, were largely American. With the UN having failed to develop into a genuine rampart of peace and security, the preexisting right of states to provide their own security must be assumed to remain intact.

If the right to self-defense, including anticipatory self-defense, remains above dispute, that still leaves open the question of whether this principle may be extended, as in Bush's interpretation, to

*These quotations appear in a paper by David M. Ackerman, legislative attorney in the American-law division of the Congressional Research Service.

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cover the right to take action against the deployment or imminent deployment of weapons of mass destruction in an aggressive manner or by an aggressive state. Citing this very case, some have said that the Bush strategy strays beyond the issue of preemption, where the threat is immediate and palpable, to claim a new right of *preventive* war. But the distinction between the two concepts is not so easy to make. The reasons were spelled out by President John F. Kennedy in response to the appearance of Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962: "We no longer live," said Kennedy,

> in a world where only the actual firing of weapons represents a sufficient challenge to a nation's security to constitute maximum peril. Nuclear weapons are so destructive and ballistic missiles are so swift that any substantially increased possibility of their use or any sudden change in their deployment may well be regarded as a definite threat to peace.

Similar reasoning informed Israel's decision to bomb Iraq's nuclear plant at Osirak in 1981. As it happens, that action was condemned by the Security Council (by then, the UN's anti-Israel majority had strengthened), and the United States joined in the vote. In retrospect, however, a number of U.S. officials have publicly regretted this stance, and it is doubtful that, were the events rerun, the U.S. would act today as it did in 1981. As Secretary of State Colin Powell said recently: "It was a clear preemptive military strike. Everyone now is quite pleased [that Israel did it] even though they got the devil criticized out of them at the time."

What this suggests is that, as with most questions of international law, there is no definitive answer to the legal soundness of Bush's doctrine of preemption in cases involving weapons of mass destruction. But there can be no doubt whatsoever that powerful legal arguments exist on its behalf. The politicians and pundits who decry it as a travesty of international law are talking through their hats.

Another major controversy sparked by the Bush strategy concerns its determination to maintain America's military preeminence. Bush's approach, said Al Gore, "not only celebrates American strengths but appears to be glorifying the notion of dominance." The goal of "freez[ing] current U.S. global superiority in place forever," chimed in *Business Week*, "could generate more instability, not less."

But, contrary to Gore's characterization, the Bush document, at least in its tone and mode of presentation, avoids triumphalism and says nothing at all about "dominance." Its emphasis is on cultivating good relations with what it calls, somewhat quaintly, the other "great powers," with whom we hope to build "fruitful habits of consultation, quiet argument, sober analysis, and common action."

Of course, the statement also contains a pledge to maintain military forces powerful enough to deter competition from "potential adversaries." But what is wrong with that? The goal of continued superiority is not absolute, as it is not aimed at friendly powers. Unlikely though the prospect may be, if a united Europe with a common security policy were to invest heavily in military strength, nothing in the Bush strategy would compel us to discourage it. Indeed, U.S. officials continue to badger European governments to enhance their military capabilities, even though the natural outcome of any such policy would be to make Europe more independent, and perhaps even more critical, of the U.S. than it is today.

As for potential adversaries, should the United States *not* strive to discourage them from mounting a military rivalry? What nation would act differently? And what good would come of it? It is ironic that some of the same voices that for years bemoaned the "arms race" now object to a U.S. plan to forestall future arms races.

But this brings us to the final complaint about the strategy paper, which is that it embodies the already much-decried Bush tendency toward "unilateralism." "If the unilateralists [in Washington] get their way," said former Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo, who now writes a column for *Forbes*, "bin Laden . . . will have won." For his part, Al Gore fretted that Bush was sabotaging "America's prospects for continuing the historic leadership we began providing" when we persuaded the world to found the United Nations.

One would never know from these comments that Bush's paper makes a deep bow to multilateralism, affirming that "there is little of lasting consequence that the United States can accomplish in the world without the sustained cooperation of its allies and friends in Canada and Europe." But the real point has to do with the pious invocation of multilateralism itself as a self-evidently noble thing. In World War II, the Axis powers were a multilateral force, while for a time Britain fought unilaterally. The Czechoslovaks stood alone in 1968, as the multilateral forces of the Warsaw Pact snuffed out their hopes for freedom. Israel fought alone in

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1948 as the multilateral forces of the Arab League tried to strangle it in its cradle. In short, the moral standing of multilateral action depends entirely on circumstances and aims.

Much of the criticism of the Bush administration's unilateralism has centered on its rejection of such initiatives as the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, the International Criminal Court, and the like. But a nation's obligation under international law is to obey the law that exists, not to join in creating new law that it finds ill-considered. Bush makes this point obliquely in the strategy paper when he says that "international obligations are to be taken seriously. . . . not to be undertaken symbolically." In any case, though, what rankles critics of American unilateralism even more than our reluctance to adopt specific initiatives is the unwillingness of the United States to subordinate itself in general to the United Nations. Here they are being hypocritical.

To repeat: in its main political purposes, the United Nations has been an almost wholly feckless body throughout its 57 years, except for those rare occasions on which it has in effect subordinated itself to U.S. policy. It is difficult to imagine any other nation engaging in the kind of self-abnegation that has been demanded of the United States vis-à-vis the UN, least of all some of the nations most critical of American unilateralism. There is in fact ample reason to believe that this demand is itself motivated by nothing more than national egoism on the part of states that envy America's power or see themselves as rivals. As Fareed Zakaria has put it: "France and Russia have turned the United Nations into a stage from which to pursue naked self-interest. They have used multilateralism as a way to further unilateral policies." Nor would such American truckling do anything but harm to the causes of peace and human rights, causes that are upheld more consistently by the United States than by the United Nations.

More important than whether the United States acts unilaterally or multilaterally are the purposes for which it acts. And here we come to the most interesting and important, not to say astonishing, aspects of the Bush strategy, if also the ones that have been the most overlooked. For these add up to nothing less than the resurrection of a Wilsonian approach to U.S. foreign policy.

THE TERM Wilsonian is sometimes used to suggest an obtuse utopianism. But in its best construction it connotes both a sensitivity to moral considerations and an enlightened self-interest that links our own well-being to the state of the world around us.

However much the new national-security strategy may contemplate unilateral action, its aims are to promote the general good. "We do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage," the document declares. "We seek instead to create a balance of power that favors human freedom." And it adds: "the aim of this strategy is to help make the world not just safer but better."

Those who are suspicious of American motives will dismiss these pronouncements as self-serving. But they are a very far cry from the words of George Bush during the 2000 election campaign. When asked, "Have you formed any guiding principles for exercising [America's] enormous power?," the Republican presidential candidate replied: "The first question is what's in the best interests of the United States."

If its concern for the general good is one sense in which Bush's strategy may be called Wilsonian, another is its insistence that America's ideals must constitute the starting point for America's policies. On this point, the document states:

> In pursuit of our goals, our first imperative is to clarify what we stand for: the United States must defend liberty and justice because these principles are right and true for all people everywhere. No nation owns these aspirations, and no nation is exempt from them.

Furthermore, Bush is convinced that American principles are of universal validity, and his strategy statement contains as forceful an assertion of this universalism as may be found:

> People everywhere want to be able to speak freely; choose who will govern them; worship as they please; educate their children—male and female; own property; and enjoy the benefits of their labor. These values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society—and the duty of protecting these values against their enemies is the common calling of freedom-loving people across the globe and across the ages.*

Then there is the choice of methods for a long-term solution to the problems addressed by this strategy. Fighting terrorists and maintaining our military superiority are essential to our safety in the here and now; but beyond the urgencies of self-defense, Bush aims to neutralize the threats we face

* This last clause is in its own way a radical assertion of multilateralism, albeit not the multilateralism of the UN, which fails to differentiate between democracies and tyrannies.

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by spreading the balm of democracy. What, after all, is a "balance of power that favors human freedom" but an echo of the slogan under which Woodrow Wilson led America into World War I?

A few commentators have in fact picked up on this Wilsonian spirit in Bush's national-security strategy. The one who has captured it most cogently and sympathetically is the historian John Lewis Gaddis, writing in *Foreign Policy*. For Gaddis,

> There is a compellingly realistic reason now to complete the idealistic task Woodrow Wilson began more than eight decades ago: the world must be made safe for democracy, because otherwise democracy will not be safe in the world. The Bush . . . report could be, therefore, the most important reformulation of U.S. grand strategy in over half a century.

But even Gaddis does not quite credit the peculiarity of this development. To say that Bush is an unlikely heir to Wilson is an understatement. His father—who courted Beijing, left Saddam Hussein ruling in Baghdad, and likened the bombardment of Sarajevo to a "hiccup"—was as much a "realist" in his approach to foreign policy as any President in recent history. And many of those to whom the younger Bush looked for advice, including Condoleezza Rice, came from his father's team. In the presidential campaign of 2000, Bush showed no sign of deviating from the paternal legacy except (as I have already noted) in the direction of being consistently less mindful of the world. In his debates with Al Gore, he differentiated his approach from that of the Clinton administration by suggesting that he would be more restrained and would focus more narrowly on the "national interest," making sure that America behaved as a "humble nation"—a pledge that the editorialists at the *New York Times* would recall wistfully in writing about this new strategy paper. So detached was Bush from foreign policy in the first months of his presidency that, despite the requirements of the law, he neglected altogether to submit a national-security strategy in 2001.

But of the many things that changed on September 11, 2001, few seem to have changed more dramatically than the worldview of George W. Bush. Besides, if Bush has not always been a Wilsonian, neither, it must be said, was Woodrow Wilson. When world war broke out in 1914, Wilson championed American neutrality. In the early stages of the conflict, according to the later testimony of his Secretary of State Robert Lansing, Wilson's "attitude toward evidence of German atrocities in Belgium and toward accounts of the horrors of submarine warfare" was that "he would not read of them and showed anger if the details were called to his attention." It took Wilson three years to conclude that America must "spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured."

The backgrounds of these two Presidents were quite different, although both drew on a deep Protestant faith. But in pursuit of his responsibility for the nation's safety, each was moved by hard experience from a policy of trying to keep trouble at arm's length to one of intense engagement, aiming to safeguard America by deploying American power to make the world safer.

For his part, President Bush has also faced squarely, as did none of his predecessors, the deep political sickness in the greater Middle East out of which grew the specific danger that manifested itself on September 11. On the scale developed by Freedom House, on which 1 means most free and 7 means least free, the median score of the 22 Arab states is 5.5, while the median for all the world's other nations is 2.5. (Iran, not Arab but a part of the same political culture, scores a miserable 6.) The UN's own Arab Human Development Report, itself compiled by a team of Arab intellectuals, concludes that this region suffers from critical deficits of freedom, women's empowerment, and "human capabilities and knowledge relative to income." Although the Arab world is far richer than sub-Saharan Africa, it scored appreciably worse on the UN report's measures of freedom and other social goods.

What all of these barometers mean, in less euphemistic terms, is that this is a region characterized by paranoia, apocalypticism, tyranny, and violence, a region where differences are settled by the sword. Societies that behave this way internally can hardly be relied upon to settle issues with the outside pacifically.

Bush's predecessors accepted the political culture of the Middle East as a given to which America had to adapt. Clinton hosted Yasir Arafat more often than any other foreign leader; Bush senior was especially close to the Saudis; Ronald Reagan traded arms for hostages with Iran; and Jimmy Carter paid fawning visits to the Syrian dictator Hafez al-Assad. But September 11 seems to have convinced George W. Bush that another approach is needed. Although he has taken every occasion to stress that our enemy is not Islam, he has decided nonetheless to try to transform the Middle East. Thus, as his

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administration prepares for war in Iraq, all talk of "exit strategies," once a centerpiece of Republican thinking and the very chef d'oeuvre of his Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has vanished, while officials across Washington bone up on the history of the American occupation of Japan.

On the assumption that America does go to war in Iraq, the strategy document suggests that the aim will be not to depart hastily after the defeat and overthrow of Saddam Hussein but to leave behind a democratized country. If successful, this would have a dramatic impact on the surrounding states, starting with an Iran that is already today in the throes of instability resulting from popular demands for more freedom and government accountability. The transformation of Iraq, estimates the Iraqi scholar Kanan Makiya, could "prove to be as large as anything that has happened in the Middle East since the fall of the Ottoman Empire."

MILITARY CONQUEST, perhaps surprisingly to some, has often proved to be an effective means of implanting democracy. Nevertheless, the United States is hardly about to invade countries that pose no military threat solely for the purpose of democratizing them. There are, however, political measures by means of which the project of democratization can be advanced elsewhere in the Middle East. Some have already been initiated by the Bush administration; others will have to be adopted if the strategy is to succeed. These include: continuing to insist on openness and accountability in the Palestinian Authority, safeguarding Afghanistan's political and economic reconstruction, supporting the political liberalization under way in Qatar and Bahrain, rethinking our blank-check policy toward the domestic behavior of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, championing the independence of Lebanon, and working to undermine the retrograde regimes of Syria and Libya.

Can we succeed? No one can know. What we do know is that over the past three decades, the world as a whole has experienced a profound political transformation. Today, more than 63 percent of the world's states are ruled by freely elected governments—double the proportion of 30 years ago. This large majority includes significant numbers of states in every non-Arab region, even sub-Saharan Africa. In other words, it includes nations and regions where, according to the received wisdom of a generation or two ago, the Western plant of democracy could not successfully take root. Can it be that the Arabs will prove to be the sole stubborn exception to this trend? If so, then a widening political and cultural chasm will separate the Arab world, and perhaps the greater Middle East, from the rest of mankind, a situation that in itself will demand new strategies and policies. We cannot yet resign ourselves to such a bleak prospect.

But words are one thing, acts another. Having devised and presented a strategy apposite to the threat confronting the United States, George Bush must demonstrate the skill, courage, and determination to execute it. And there will be obstacles aplenty, not least from the critics whose ranks multiply with every sign of presidential wavering and whose warnings and plaints sound uncannily like those faced in an earlier age by Harry S. Truman when he launched the policy of containment.

Truman's request for aid to Greece and Turkey was denounced by one prominent Senator as "a new American imperialism," aimed at securing "oil for the American monopolies." The columnist Walter Lippmann warned that by failing to work through the newly established UN, Truman had "cut a hole in the charter which it would be very difficult to repair." It was only because such voices were spurned that the world was eventually delivered from the shadow of Soviet tyranny.

Now as then, the critics offer no real alternative strategy, only a counsel of evasion. In 1947, when the UN was but two years old, the notion that the world body could serve as a substitute for the exercise of America's own will and power may perhaps have been a pardonable hope. Today, when we know better, such advice is worse than pusillanimous; it is utterly cynical. By contrast, Bush's response to the challenge that was brought home to us last September 11 is both thoughtful and brave. Our national security is indeed at issue. Everything now is riding on the follow-through.

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Has Darwin Met His Match?

David Berlinski

The Reverend William Paley published *Natural Theology: Or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature* in 1802, shortly after the French astronomer and mathematician Pierre-Simon Laplace brought out the first two volumes of his *Traité du Mécanique Céleste*. Twenty-three years later, Laplace published the fifth and final volume of his magnificent treatise, and so brought to a close the first and greatest of scientific revolutions. He was thereafter promoted to the scientific pantheon, where, dignified among the immortals, he has reposed ever since. Paley, by contrast, has been the victim of a number of near-death experiences, and like so many men who have survived close calls, he has remained eager to remind the world that he is still alive.

Natural Theology is an argument for the existence of the Christian deity, a defense of the faith; but its centerpiece—the argument from design—has long slipped its doctrinal noose. "When we come to inspect [a] watch," Paley observed, we note that "its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose." It follows that "the watch must have had a maker." By the same token, living systems are very much like human artifacts in their complexity. Their own "marks of design," Paley urged, "are too strong to be got over." It follows again that this "design must have had a designer. The designer must have been a person. That person is God."

This argument retains something of the clarifying effect of a hammer struck twice. The marks of design—bang! The existence of a designer—bang again! But the publication in 1859 of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* allowed biologists, who had long appreciated the force of Paley's inference, to escape its conclusions. Coordination and design are required to explain the emergence of human artifacts—waterwheels as well as watches, sun dials as well as sun dresses—but it is an alliance between time and chance that explains the complexity of living creatures. No design is in place in the natural world; no designer is needed.

Darwin's theory of evolution—random variation and natural selection—made it possible, as the contemporary biologist Richard Dawkins has written, to be "an intellectually fulfilled atheist." And if not fulfilled, then certainly at ease.

The Reverend Revived

Within the past ten years or so, however, such satisfactions as atheism affords have come to seem a little premature. Paley's claims have been pressed anew, as the argument from design, its revival widespread, has appeared in both evolutionary biology and (as we shall see) mathematical physics.

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Within biology itself, the argument from design has become the gravamen of the "intelligent design" movement, which has engendered a current of sympathy among philosophers, biologists, and ordinary men and women long skeptical of Darwinian doctrine. The movement's spiritual adviser has been Phillip E. Johnson, a professor of criminal law at the University of California. In 1991, Johnson published a shrewd and widely read critique of Darwinian theory under the title, *Darwin on Trial*. Like Michael Denton's *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, published five years earlier, the book had some of the effect of wet dynamite. It sputtered for a while and then exploded.

Johnson's criticisms were not new; they were, in fact, part of a community of criticisms that had been marshaled against Darwin for many years.[1] But Johnson went further than his predecessors. In what now seems a rhetorical masterstroke, he argued that biologists had embraced Darwin and rejected design by virtue of their allegiance to a worldview that was wholly extra-scientific: namely, philosophical naturalism. This is the view that, in Johnson's words, "the entire realm of nature [is] a closed system of material causes and effects, which cannot be influenced by anything from the outside."

Providence provided Johnson with opponents dutifully willing to confirm his diagnosis by exhibiting the disease that it signified. Thus, the literary critic Frederick Crews has argued recently in the *New York Review of Books* that "There *is* a fundamental principle in all science—only material and observable forces can count" (emphasis added). But if there is such a principle, Johnson has rejoined to critics like Crews, it is not to be found as the premise to any of the great physical theories; nor is it evident in their conclusions. It functions as an article of faith.

Although Johnson's book did not elicit the assent of the biological establishment—hardly a group interested in searching self-criticism—it did something more important. It attracted the attention of a number of younger scholars—Michael Behe, William Dembski, Paul Nelson, Jonathan Wells, Steven Meyer. These were men with very respectable training in biochemistry, molecular biology, genetics, philosophy, and mathematics. They found Johnson's critique bracing in part because it confirmed an allegiance to Christian doctrine, and in part because, with the assumption of naturalism tentatively indicted in philosophy, they saw no reason to exclude the hypothesis of design in biology. In this they were correct. There is no reason.

Their decision to resurrect the design hypothesis represented a daring move on the chessboard, an unexpected flanking attack. Secular intellectuals have always affirmed their adherence to Darwin's theory because they have felt that the alternative is the abyss. The abyss had now acquired a loud, lively, and unembarrassed voice: living creatures are designed, and if the designer's identity is not obvious, it can easily be inferred. In the last years, advocates of intelligent design have put forward their views in books, conference reports, Internet publications, public lectures, scientific debates, and before various elementary-school boards—where, in a marvelous display of cheekiness, they have demanded that the public schools teach the controversy that they themselves have engendered.

Still, if the Reverend Paley has by their efforts been revived, he has been nearly dead before. Despite his reappearance on the intellectual scene, it is worth observing that a man who survives being drowned only to find himself in danger of being hanged may well possess a diminishing capacity to evade disaster.

Interrogating the Dead

DARWIN'S THEORY of evolution and theories of intelligent design are in conceptual conflict. Although they may well both be false, they cannot both be true. Each party to the dispute has thus become persuaded that with the other character in the same room, there is simply not enough oxygen to survive.

It is the fossil record that is a preliminary witness to both theories of evolution and design, the stacked dead endeavoring to convey some discernible signal to their various partisans amid a great deal of background noise. But the signal is often confusing.

Living systems, Darwin maintained, are organized continuously, one species trailing off into the next. But the dead have done little to confirm this thesis. "Most of the fossil record," the paleontologist Robert Carroll has noted, "does not support a strictly gradualistic interpretation." It does not, that is, support the obvious and intended interpretation of Darwin's theory.

This circumstance is properly a source of satisfaction to proponents of intelligent design. In *Icons of Evolution* (2002), Jonathan Wells, who holds a degree in molecular genetics from Berkeley, summarizes the common view that the Cambrian ex-

[1] For my own contribution to this literature, see "The Deniable Darwin," COMMENTARY, June 1996.

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plosion, the seemingly abrupt appearance of diverse and highly developed fauna in the early Paleozoic era, is a great imponderable in the geological record. The various life forms that erupted then look for all the world as if they were simply planted in the ground by some obviously competent designing intelligence.

But all that is on the one hand. On the other hand, if a great many species enter the fossil record fully formed, and then depart unchanged for Valhalla some million years later, the reverse is true as well, most notably in the evolution of the vertebrates. The margin between the reptiles and the mammals appears far more friable today than it did a century ago. Paleontologists now speak of mammal-like reptiles, chiefly the Pelyocosaurs and the Therapsids. Within the amniotes—the broad class comprising the birds, the reptiles, and the mammals—we have the benefit of an unusually full record of transition sequences and can see them proceeding inexorably over the course of 150 million years, with a variety of organisms busily changing their skeleton, gross anatomy, way of life, feeding habits, digestion, locomotion, and even their cellular physiology. These changes are demonstrable through the fossil record to a fine level of detail, the delicate bones of the mammalian ear emerging in stages from the bones of the reptilian jaw. In the late Triassic and early Jurassic, one can almost see the sequences touching, Cynodont to Morganucodon, scales to fur, cold blood to hot.

When the dead are interrogated at length, then, oxygen levels do drop in certain chambers of conflict, but curiously enough, both Darwinian and design theorists seem to be turning blue as a result.

Interrogating the Living

If the dead are enigmatic and unavailing, what of the world of the living: the world in which creatures yawn, stretch, sleep, slither, and scramble for advantage? There, unceasing variety is the rule. Dogs divide themselves into more than 500 breeds, ranging from the very large to the very small; the domestic cat is found underfoot in only 50 or so flavors. The question is why.

Just why should dogs come in so many shapes and sizes, and not cats? Why *in principle*? Why, for that matter, should mimetic design in certain moths and butterflies exceed the observational powers of even the most capable predators, the design toppling over into a form of artistic ecstasy, while camouflage in other species is a matter of a few half-hearted disguises, a splash of stripes, a daub of pigment? Why do certain orchids involve themselves in an incredibly intricate reproductive routine while others, growing nearby, are content to slap a dusting of pollen on their shimmering petals and trust that their precious seed will be carried on the hind limbs of some heedless insect?

Why echolocation in the bats but not the buzzards? Why dancing among the bees but not the butterflies? Webs among the spiders but not the centipedes? Poison among the toads but not the frogs? Pouches among the possums but not the penguins?

And why the peacock's tail?

In the face of such questions, Darwinian theorists may be observed standing in silence. They are looking upward, apparently much occupied in assessing cracks in the ceiling. Beyond saying that that is just the way things are, what *could* they say? Intelligent-design theorists, on the other hand, hear the heavy hammer-beats of Paley's argument: the "marks of design" are too strong to be got over; such design must have a designer.

Yes? But what then follows? What follows *precisely*, once a designer has been acknowledged?

In commenting on the peacock's tail, Phillip Johnson lightheartedly imagined that such preposterous contrivances were just what one might expect from a designer with a sense of whimsy. But why stop at whimsy? Why not inadvertence, anger, mockery, incompetence, colorblindness, bad taste, profligacy, or any other psychological disposition that can plausibly be connected to action?

And suppose the peacock's tail were found mounted on the hindquarters of a donkey; or the garden shrew were given the power to speak Dutch. Suppose a world in which cats acquired the arts of ingratiation while dogs declined all further services to man—*Sniff that suitcase? The one that might contain a bomb? I think not*—and whales returned from the sea to take up residence in the rich pasture land from which they originally departed. Suppose the carnival of the animals and the world's natural riot permutated in a thousand different ways. What then?

Why, nothing would change—save for the fact that it would be the donkey and not the peacock that prompted an inference to design. *His* choice, design theorists might say. But if His choice, why made, and according to which principles?

Design theorists may now be observed standing in companionable silence alongside Darwinian biologists. They, too, seem to be gazing upward, studying the same queer little cracks in the ceiling.

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The Vexing Eye

IN 1994, Dan E. Nilsson and Suzanne Pilger published a paper in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society* entitled, "A Pessimistic Estimate of the Time Required for an Eye to Evolve." By "pessimistic," they meant an estimate that, if anything, exaggerated the length of time required for the eye's evolution. Even so, their conclusions were remarkable. "A light-sensitive patch," they wrote, "will gradually turn into a focused-lens eye" in only a few hundred thousand years.

Darwin had himself been troubled by the existence of the mammalian eye, whose evolution by random mutation and natural selection has always seemed difficult to imagine. Nilsson and Pilger's paper provided a welcome redemptive note. A few hundred thousand years and the job would be done. Authors have waited longer for their royalty checks.

As Nilsson and Pilger's paper gained currency, it amassed content it did not actually possess. Biologists who failed to read what Nilsson and Pilger had written—the great majority, apparently—assumed that they had constructed a computer simulation of the eye's evolution, a program that could frog-march those light-sensitive cells all the way to a functioning eye using nothing more than random variation and natural selection.[2] This would have been an impressive and important achievement, a vivid demonstration that Darwinian principles can create simulated biological artifacts.

But no such demonstration has been achieved, and none is in prospect. Nilsson and Pilger's computer simulation is a myth. In a private communication, Nilsson has indicated to me that the requisite simulation is in preparation; his assurances are a part of that large and generous family of promises of which "your check is in the mail" may be the outstanding example.

What Nilsson and Pilger in fact described was the evolution not of an eye but of an eye*ball*, and they described it using ordinary back-of-the envelope calculations. Far from demonstrating the emergence of a complicated biological structure, what they succeeded in showing was simply that an imaginary population of light-sensitive cells could be flogged relentlessly up a simple adaptive peak, a point never at issue because never in doubt.

Despite a good deal of research conducted over the last twenty years, the mammalian visual system is still poorly understood, and in large measure not understood at all. The eye acts as a focusing lens and as a transducer, changing visual signals to electrical ones. Within the brain and nervous system, complicated algorithms must come into play before such signals may be interpreted. And no theory has anything whatsoever of interest to say about the fact that the visual system terminates its activities in a visual *experience*, an episode of consciousness. We cannot characterize the most obvious fact about sight—that it involves seeing something.

These are again circumstances that properly afford a measure of satisfaction to members of the intelligent-design community. But in what respect is our understanding improved by assuming that the visual system is the result of intelligent design? Unless very specific religious hypotheses are invoked, neither the identity nor the nature of the designer is known. The principles that he employs are a mystery, and the objects of his design are not well understood. Certain questions now reappear with unyielding insistence. Could a designer whose nature we cannot fathom, using principles we cannot specify, construct a system we cannot characterize?

If the question is unyielding, so, too, is its answer: who knows?

Darwin's Challenge

"IF," DARWIN wrote, "it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down." These are lapidary words. They suggest a man prepared to subject his ideas to the sternest possible test. And they issue in an exemplary challenge: *show* me that complex organ or organism.

Darwin's challenge is as easy to state as it is difficult to meet—an example, perhaps, of the old boy's skill in adaptive self-protection. How could the requisite demonstration be conducted? There is, on the one hand, the organ or organism as it now exists. And there is, on the other hand, its history, the path taking it from the past to the present. But the evolutionary history of a great many species has been lost, the butterfly, the beetle, and the bat all emerging from time's endless fog as butterfly, beetle, and bat. To show that these organisms "could not *possibly* have been formed" (emphasis added) by a Darwinian mechanism demands a complicated argument, one that begins with their observable properties and

[2] The physicist Matt Young offers this inadvertently rich account of his own inability to read the literature: "Creationists used to argue . . . that there was not enough time for an eye to develop. A computer simulation by Dan Nilsson and Suzanne Pilger gave the lie to that claim: Nilsson and Pilger estimated conservatively that 500,000 years was enough time."

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then strikes negatively at *every* possible path by which they might have been created by "numerous, successive, slight modifications."

In *Darwin's Black Box*, published in 1995, the biochemist Michael Behe identified such an observable property—what he called "irreducible complexity"—and proposed precisely such a negative argument. Darwin's challenge having been met to Behe's satisfaction, logic then played its familiar role: if there is no Darwinian path to certain biological structures, they must have emerged by design.

Beyond being complex, just what is an *irreducibly* complex system? It is, Behe writes, "a single system composed of several well-matched interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning." Irreducible complexity applies to both biological and nonbiological systems. As an example of the latter, Behe offers the mousetrap. Its parts—hammer, spring, holding bar, platform, catch—interact; they each contribute to the trap's function, which is to catch or kill mice; and if any part of the trap is removed, the trap fails properly to function.

Behe's definition of irreducible complexity specifies a concept while simultaneously providing a means for its detection. That is its great strength. Is this organ, organism, system, or creature irreducibly complex? Remove a part. The system's subsequent failure is a sign of its irreducible complexity. The first steps in forging a scientific concept—make it clear, make it operational—have been taken.

Of course, a mousetrap is a human artifact, and the argument that Behe makes in cooked-up cases needs to be ported to biological systems. Here, the structures that Behe considers are biochemical: their parts consist of molecules. (To his credit, Behe offers a powerful and convincing case that Darwinian theories that fail to encompass the details of biochemistry are exercises in self-deception.) He considers in turn the bacterial flagellum, which is a tiny but horribly efficient rotary motor found in very primitive bacteria, the blood-clotting cascade, systems of molecular transport, and the immunodefense system—and he considers these systems on the level of their biochemical constituents.

As these examples reveal, and as readers of technical journals already know, biochemical systems display coordination, regulation, flexibility, delicacy of effect, unheard-of precision, efficiency, and great complexity. Behe's astonishment at the vivid and miraculous world thus disclosed is hardly a matter of hyperbole. It reflects the living truth. And one further point, the obvious one: the systems that Behe discusses are irreducibly complex. Strip just one protein from the blood-clotting system, whether by design or by disease, and the normal cascade leading from a cut to a clot fails, the poor creature evacuating its life along with its blood.

It is precisely such irreducibly complex systems, Behe writes, that meet Darwin's challenge. His argument now becomes conceptual rather than empirical. Some things cannot be done, and the "cannot" in this case has the full force of logical impossibility:

> An irreducibly complex system cannot be produced directly . . . by slight successive modifications of precursor systems, because any precursor to an irreducibly complex system that is missing a part is by definition non-functional.

Just as an arbitrary angle cannot be trisected by means of a ruler and compass, so an irreducibly complex system cannot be produced directly by "numerous, successive, slight modifications" of its precursor systems. A mousetrap—or any other irreducibly complex system—cannot be assembled from its precursors if those precursors are missing a part of the original system. "Any precursor to an irreducibly complex system that is missing a part is by definition nonfunctional."

This is true. And it is clear. But it is not conclusive.

Behe's argument succeeds in canceling one path from the past to the present: the familiar, assembly-line model in which a complex artifact like a mousetrap is assembled piece by piece, the base going first, the hammer, spring, holding bar, and catch attached in stages. But this mode of construction, which is common enough in the case of virtually every human artifact, is never seen in the biological world. That is in itself cause for suspicion. But the real objection is logical. If Behe's argument were to meet Darwin's challenge, it would have to cancel not one but *every* possible Darwinian path between the precursors of an irreducibly complex system and the system itself. He would thus have to show that irreducibly complex systems arise by means of an assembly line and *only* by such means. And that is plainly not so—even in the case of artifacts.

A three-legged stool, to chose a modest example, is irreducibly complex. Remove a leg and the stool topples. But a three-legged stool may be constructed by "numerous, successive, slight modifications" of a solid cylindrical block of wood, modifications that serve to hollow out three arches, leaving only the

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stool's three legs and seat upon completion. The stool is irreducibly complex; its precursors are not. And the path to complexity just sketched falls entirely within Darwin's ambit of small changes, each conferring some selective advantage. As those arches are carved, weight is reduced and stability increased.

A gap has now opened between Behe's definition and the conclusion he means to draw. With a few deft maneuvers, the gap may be further enlarged. An irreducibly complex system must fail if a part is removed; well and good. But from this it hardly follows that an irreducibly complex system must fail if its parts are *modified*, or if new parts are substituted for old.

The gap is large enough to have accommodated by now a number of Behe's detractors. After the publication of his book, biologists wasted no time in demonstrating how the common mousetrap might be modified in successive stages by an adroit substitution of parts, the platform disappearing in favor of the ground itself or a table top, and so on to the hammer, spring, holding bar, and catch. They then imagined this backward tinkering going forward by evolutionary means, the mousetrap getting better and better as its parts became more and more refined. For a time, the Internet vibrated with imaginary mousetraps of varying degrees of ingenuity, with a number of biologists losing themselves entirely in detailed designs, their diagrams drawn to scale and an aspect of obsessive lunacy stealing over their work.

STILL: MOUSETRAPS are one thing, three-legged stools another, and living systems yet another. Biologists who had mastered the mousetrap were rather less successful in explaining the origins of the *biological* systems Behe had described in patient detail. When he himself searched the existing literature for plausible models, Behe had found little of interest and nothing of value. In reviewing his book, biologists asserted that the problem he had identified did not exist, and would anyway soon be remedied. A number of biologists have in fact proposed biochemical pathways leading to the formation of complex biochemical systems, the Internet again vibrating with their proposals. But Behe has in turn criticized their suggestions, arguing generally that where the pathways are Darwinian, they do not succeed, and where they succeed, they are not Darwinian. In this, it seems to me, he has been entirely convincing. The origins of irreducibly complex biological systems remain what they have always been, and that is an utter mystery.

But these rattling exchanges of small-arms fire represent little more than tactical exercises, the usual (and usually hidden) pop and counter-pop of controversy within biology itself. Behe's concerns were with what military theorists call grand strategy, and his ambition was to justify an inference to design by means of a *logical* resolution of Darwin's challenge.

What Behe has shown is that, with respect to certain biochemical systems, Darwinian biologists do not have a clue. What he *needed* to show was something stronger. He needed to show that they do not have a prayer.

Chance and Necessity

As I intimated early on, the argument from design has been revived not only within biology but also within mathematical physics. Surveying the possibilities for scientific explanation, Jacques Monod, the eminent French molecular biologist, concluded rather grimly that the universe is ruled by necessity and by chance; there is nothing else. Monod made this claim in an elegant volume entitled *Chance and Necessity* (1970), a work that has come to play an important if often unacknowledged role in contemporary debate over these matters.

The laws of physics control the behavior of matter. It is there that necessity rules, its iron fist unyielding. Necessity explains the movement of the sun, the moon, and the planets; it explains the dancing play of atoms and molecules; it governs the very skin of creation. But chance—luck—is also a great governing force. It is chance that accounts for the origin of life, and chance again that has governed the emergence of human beings, with their complicated languages, their insatiable desires, and their doomed sense of curiosity.

But is this all there is? Do necessity and chance exhaust the explanatory options?

The biochemistry of living systems is based on carbon. The periodic table, which begins with hydrogen, and then straggles up and down the chart, covers more than 100 atoms. Among them, only carbon can bond with other atoms in four different directions, and so only carbon has the flexibility to create ever larger and more complicated organic structures. As it happens, there is plenty of the stuff around, a state of affairs no less perplexing than the fact that apples unsupported fall downward. Why should this be so?

In 1946, the astronomer Fred Hoyle published the first of his pioneering studies, *The Synthesis of the Elements from Hydrogen*. The rich and complex panoply of chemical elements that is characteristic

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of the universe, Hoyle argued, must have been forged by a sequential process, one starting with hydrogen and then continuing step by step until the construction of carbon, the universe enlarging itself in stages. The process could not be chemical in any ordinary sense; chemistry leaves the interior of the atom untouched. The creation of matter must thus have been handled within the interior of the stars.

If hydrogen is the first step in the chain, deuterium is the next, the fused product of two hydrogen atoms and a vital link in the formation of carbon. The fusion that fashions deuterium depends crucially on the magnitude of the strong nuclear force. (There are four fundamental forces in nature: gravity, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak nuclear forces.) Like all forces, the strong nuclear force is expressed as a number. The value of that number is critical. Were it weaker than it is, hydrogen atoms would have found themselves unable to fuse; were it stronger, the stars would long ago have burned themselves out.

None of this took place. The strong nuclear force has the value that it does.

Although the next step is relatively simple—deuterium atoms fuse together to form helium—thereafter the story grows complicated. The laws of physics would normally prevent helium atoms from spontaneously fusing to form anything more interesting than helium. But two vagrant helium atoms meeting in the interior of a star *can* fuse together to form what is called a beryllium intermediate. It is an intricate celestial dance, and one that is highly unstable because beryllium intermediates are very short-lived.

In 1953, Edwin Salpeter discovered that, like an opera singer and the glass she shatters, the nuclear resonance between helium atoms and intermediate-beryllium atoms is precisely tuned to facilitate the creation of beryllium. (Nuclear resonance is the vibration produced when the frequency of the absorbing nucleus is identical to the frequency of the emitting nucleus.) The process is wonderfully elegant and entirely improbable. What would otherwise have been a process sputtering into the abyss has now been promoted to a process taking helium into a new element.

But there is yet no carbon—and here Hoyle entertained his most daring conjecture. Quite before any evidence was available, he predicted the existence of a *second* nuclear-resonance sounding directly between beryllium and helium, one that would in its turn enable the great stellar furnaces to produce carbon in abundance. This prediction was verified. The steps involved in the construction of carbon lay revealed—and so, too, the path to life.

Hoyle was deeply troubled by the specific nuclear-resonance levels that he had discovered. That they expressed physical properties of material objects was not in doubt. But what explained the appearance of those physical properties in the great causal chain stretching from the Big Bang to the emergence of life? On this point, the laws of physics and the vagaries of chance would both seem unavailing. "A commonsense interpretation of the facts," Hoyle observed, "suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature."

Against All the Odds

The facts are not in dispute. In both molecular biology and mathematical physics, things seem to have happened *in defiance of all the odds*. It is the analysis of these six ultimately crucial words that has occupied William Dembski, a young mathematician of impeccable academic training and a specialist in probability theory.

Dembski is the author of *The Design Inference* (1998) and *No Free Lunch* (2001). These are serious and difficult works. They merit respect. In much that he has written, Dembski's proximate target has been Darwin's theory of evolution, although, like so many of Darwin's critics, Dembski has also discovered that Darwin is a most elusive target, bobbing and weaving around the ring and every now and then pausing to deliver a smart blow of his own. But if Darwin is Dembski's proximate target, his real target all along has been Jacques Monod, and his aim has been to demonstrate that necessity and chance do *not* exhaust the options for scientific explanation. There is design as well.

Other members of the design-theory community have seen design emerging as Darwinian theory weakens. Dembski is interested in restoring design to the community of *scientific properties*—like mass, force, or momentum—and thus endowing the argument from design with a direct form of legitimacy.

Dembski begins with a very plausible general premise: events that can be explained neither by the laws of physics nor by chance must be explained by an appeal to the intervention of an intelligent agent.

It is surely plain that many events cannot be explained in terms of the laws of mathematical physics, or any other laws for that matter. The precise way in which Shakespeare arranged 113 words

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to fashion his nineteenth sonnet ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day . . ."), owes nothing to any system of physical laws. Shakespeare might, after all, have written, "I shall compare thee to a summer's day," losing poetical effectiveness but violating no physical constraints.

It is just as plain that many events cannot be explained by chance. The odds are just too small. "Phenomena with very small probabilities," the French mathematician Emile Borel remarked, "do not occur." They do not occur, that is, by chance.

Borel's thesis, if not a tautology, is certainly a truism. And yet Dembski argues that Borel's maxim, taken as it stands, is false. "Plenty of highly improbable events," he writes in *The Design Inference*, "happen by chance all the time."

> The precise sequence of heads and tails in a long sequence of coin tosses, the precise configuration of darts from throwing darts at a dart board, and the precise seating arrangement of people at a cinema are all highly improbable events that, *apart from any further information*, can properly be explained by chance. [emphasis added]

Truisms thus seem to be in conflict. But of the two, it is Borel's maxim, Dembski concludes, that requires revision. Certain kinds of improbable events happen "all the time." Others do not. In the case of those that do not, an additional property has to be taken into account—the "further information" that Dembski mentions. They are *specified*.

A specification is something like a pattern, a description, or an identifying tag; it represents a selection from among alternatives, and so involves a division of the stream of possibilities. Dembski offers an example drawn from archery. If an archer is given a large target, and encouraged simply to let fly, then, no matter where his arrows land, they will have reached an improbable place and so have realized an unlikely event. Chance is still in charge. But if a target—say, a familiar bull's-eye—has been fixed, then a halter has been placed on the riot of possibilities. The fixed target serves as a specification, picking out one set of places to the exclusion of all others, and the archer hitting this target repeatedly has defeated chance. He has done so by exhibiting skill and attention: marks of design, intimations of intelligence.

In Scrabble, any particular long sequence of letters forming a nonsensical word—PZQATRV—is improbable; but, conforming to no pattern, it is not specified. A short sequence of letters spelling out a particular English word ("dog," say) is specified (since it conforms to a pattern), but not improbable; it might have appeared on the Scrabble board by chance. But Shakespeare's nineteenth sonnet is both specified and improbable. It conforms to a pattern, and it is unlikely to have appeared by chance.

These observations suggest to Dembski a reformulation of Borel's maxim: it is *specified* phenomena with very small probabilities that do not occur by chance.

Having offered Borel a face-saving detail, Dembski is now in the position to offer Paley a life-saving deal. Specified improbability is the very mark of design: the trace left in matter of a cognitive act. It is specified improbability that characterizes thimbles and thermostats and watches, bone-handled knives, computer programs, steam shovels, symphonic suites, lace lingerie and lipstick, Vicuna coats, Etruscan vases, sand-castles, epic poems, French epigrams, German novels, mathematical theorems, paintings done in oil and a sign found in Lubbock, Texas spelling out the words *Good Eats*.

And it is specified improbability, again, that characterizes DNA and the various proteins, the bacterial flagellum, and the blood-clotting cascade. It is in fact ubiquitous, this property, a kind of steady note sounding throughout living systems, from the Tyrannosaurus roaring in the Jurassic right down to the cellular telomeres currently vibrating under its influence. If the specified improbabilities in human artifacts suggest inexorably a human designer, the specified improbabilities in biological artifacts suggest inexorably a biological designer as well.

Nor is there any need to stop at the margins of the biological world. Nuclear-resonance levels are both improbable and specified—improbable because nuclear-resonance levels could have had other values, and specified because these nuclear-resonance levels and no others are needed in order for life to exist. The inference to a designer proceeds apace; it gathers force. It is by these means that Paley has been offered yet another lease on life.

The Hinge of Doubt

BUT THE hinge of doubt begins to creak. Eliminating chance through small probabilities—these words are the sub-title of *The Design Inference*—is an enterprise that cannot begin if probabilities cannot be objectively assigned to various events. It is not always easy to see how this might be done. It is one thing to assign probabilities to a lottery, or a horse race; but just how might one go about assigning probabilities to, for example, the creation of *Las Meninas*, Velasquez's great

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painting of the Spanish royal court—the first step in establishing its claim to design? Probabilities require a world of alternatives. There are either no alternatives to *Las Meninas* because it is unique, or infinitely many because it resembles every other splotch of paint on canvas.

What probability, for that matter, should we assign to the emergence of a chicken? Given an egg, the chicken's appearance is almost inevitable; absent that egg, impossible. Which is it to be? What is the probability that Luxembourg might succeed in conquering Brazil? Or that Chinese officials might declare Basque the new language of China? Or that the queen of England might have been constructed of ice instead of flesh, her body kept at constant temperature by means of a far-reaching Masonic conspiracy?

It is not easy to say. And that, of course, is the problem.

If it is difficult to assign probabilities to a great many things, events, processes, or circumstances, it is still more difficult to determine whether they conform to a specification, the bridge to the bridge to agency. A specification is a human gesture. It may be offered or withheld, delayed or deferred; it may be precise or incomplete, partial or unique. Paley's watch may thus be specified in terms of its timekeeping properties, but it may also be specified in terms of the arrangement or number of its parts; and its parts may be specified in horological, mechanical, molecular, atomic, or even sub-atomic terms. Each specification introduces a different calculation of probabilities. Paley's watch may be improbable under one specification, probable under another.

And whatever the specification of specification, it is in any event hardly clear that intentional acts must be specified in the first place. A random walk, a careless gesture, the significant sigh, the soul-shattering sniffle—to what specification do they conform? The word *basta* overheard in a dark Italian alley, a woman's voice conveying all the urgency of human intention—but a *specification*? A specification is, after all, a way of distinguishing among possibilities. What possibilities are at issue in these cases? And what choices from among a sample of possibilities do the events represent?

These examples could be multiplied at will. They suggest that there are plenty of intentional acts—acts reflecting a choice—that neither require nor conform to a specification. If that is so, then specified improbability is not necessary to trigger an inference to design. If it is not necessary, there then remains the question of whether it is sufficient.

According to Dembski, if and only if there is both specification and improbability can chance be eliminated in favor of design; otherwise, not. No one, for example, would attribute the origin of Shakespeare's nineteenth sonnet to chance. That is true: the sonnet is indeed highly improbable. But what does *specified* improbability have to do with it? If 113 words are randomly rearranged, every possible arrangement of them has the same probability of occurrence, whether the arrangement represents Shakespeare's limpid lines or sheer gibberish. No one would attribute *any* particular organization of Shakespeare's words, whether specified or not, to chance. And for just the reason Borel offered: phenomena with very small probabilities do not occur. A specification does nothing to alter the odds. It is improbability that does the heavy lifting; the specifications have gone along for the ride.

Once this is seen, Dembski's reformulation of Borel's principle must be discreetly withdrawn; it rests on a mistake. It is true that "plenty of highly improbable events happen by chance," but false that they happen *all the time*. They happen, in fact, precisely as many times as one might expect, given their probabilities.

Adieu to specifications and adieu to Dembski's initial premise. If specified improbabilities are not necessary to trigger the elimination of chance, and if the elimination of chance is not sufficient to trigger an inference to design, it follows that specified improbabilities are not sufficient, either. We are left with unlikely events and the sense of puzzlement that they inevitably provoke. In both molecular biology and mathematical physics, things seem to have happened in defiance of all the odds. And we do not know why.

The Ineffable Inimitable

If design is to be a scientific category, it must answer, as Dembski (following Paley) quite understands, to a scientific property. And if design leaves marks in the natural world, biologists and physicists dissatisfied with naturalism as a doctrine are committed to identifying those marks. But the curious thing is that the more these mysterious marks of design are sought, the more elusive they seem to be.

Nineteenth-century biologists often imagined that living systems were perfumed by an *élan vital*, which French military theorists proudly compared to the mysterious *élan* animating their soldiers. Although intellectual fashions have changed over the course of one hundred years, the *élan vital* has not disappeared. It has simply been renamed. Citing

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the evolutionary biologist George Williams, Phillip Johnson has argued that living systems comprise two domains, the material and the codical. The material domain is exhausted by certain material objects, chiefly DNA and the various proteins. The codical domain consists of something more. Many scientists have taken to identifying this "something more" with the concept of information, but since the usage of that term is so loose we might as well refer to it as the ineffable inimitable.[3]

Both Johnson and Williams agree that what I am calling the ineffable inimitable "is fundamentally distinct from the chemical medium in which it is recorded." Thus Williams argues that Cervantes's great novel *Don Quixote* just *is* the ineffable inimitable, "most often coded as a pattern of ink on paper" but also capable of existing "in many other media." Less interested in metaphysical niceties, Johnson draws a more straightforward conclusion from Williams's remarks: if matter and the ineffable inimitable are truly incommensurable, "then Darwinism cannot be true as a theory." Random variation and natural selection are physical properties of material objects. Explaining the origin of the ineffable inimitable by an appeal to the material properties of living systems is rather like explaining the origin of *Don Quixote* by an appeal to the physical properties of ink and paper. Not to be outdone, Richard Dawkins has remarked that he has long admired the idea of information—the ineffable inimitable—and made it the foundation of his research on many occasions.[4]

George Williams is a prominent evolutionary biologist; and Phillip Johnson his critic. What the ineffable inimitable is, neither man is prepared precisely to say.

Over the years, other scholars have been more forthcoming. The ineffable inimitable has been identified with a fluid, an aura, a spirit, an entelechy, a soul, a field, and a force; it has been described in terms of entropy, energy, complexity, Kolmogorov complexity, organization, self-organization, hierarchical self-organization, organized hierarchies, catastrophe theory, graph theory, automata theory, and various theories of computation and control. Irreducible complexity and specified improbability are the latest incarnations of the ineffable inimitable.

The search for the ineffable inimitable continues, if only because it answers to a human need. But not every urgent human need is destined to be met, and not every anxiety of the heart has its causes in reality itself. Experience might suggest another counsel. The search for the ineffable inimitable is fruitless.

(In)conclusion

AN INQUIRY of this sort must inevitably end by disappointing every party to the dispute while exhilarating none. Members of the intelligent-design community have been stalwart in their attack on Darwin's theory of evolution. This has been their strength. Mindful of the old-fashioned wisdom that you can't beat something with nothing, they have proposed design as an alternative, without ever quite realizing the extent to which Darwinism and design share very similar weaknesses.

Darwin's theory of evolution makes use of a fantastic extrapolation in which the mechanism of random variation and natural selection, responsible for a number of trivial local effects, is read into the great global record of life itself, so that the development of antibiotic resistance in bacteria becomes the model for the development of such complex structures as the mammalian eye, or the immuno-defense system. As design theorists have noted, this is rather like arguing that since kangaroos can hop, they can, given time enough and chance, learn to fly.

The same faith in the same flaw—the fallacy of extrapolation, to give it a name—runs through design theories as well. Given the human ability to fashion objects and create artifacts, design theorists argue that some similar process is at work in the construction of biological structures. Is it? What justifies the assumption that a process that accounts for the construction of a pocket watch, a sundress, or a nation-state might also account for the emergence of the blood-clotting cascade or the immuno-defense system? It is entirely possible, after all, that complicated biological structures lie quite beyond the possibility of design, no matter the designer and regardless of the principles employed. Faith in a designed universe might well be rather like faith in a planned economy, a doctrinal commitment that cannot survive a confrontation with experience.

It has likewise been the ambition of the design-theory community to interpose design as a category that might occupy the contested territory between necessity and chance. No philosophical argument renders this ambition absurd; and no scientific theory suggests that it is impossible. But if theories of

[3] For a discussion of the explanatory value of information theory, see my "What Brings a World Into Being?" in the April 2001 COMMENTARY.

[4] Dawkins's remarks, as well as those of Johnson and Williams, appear in *Intelligent Design Creationism and its Critics* (2001), edited by Robert T. Pennock.

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design cannot be ruled out of court by facile invocations of philosophical naturalism, design theorists have for their part tended to underestimate the enduring intellectual force behind Monod's claim that the categories of chance and necessity are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive.

What interested him the most, Albert Einstein once remarked, was whether the deity had any choice in the creation of the universe. Einstein is very often presumed to have had a religious sensibility; this remark reveals its profoundly austere nature. For Einstein's comment suggests two, and only two, possibilities: a deity with no choice, or a deity with a world to choose and then to make.

If the deity's actions in creating the world are necessary, it is the principles that explain the *nature* of this world that are of interest and compel attention. In the end, I suspect, those principles will be matters of pure logic, simple and compelling, and if ever they are discovered, human beings will share with the deity pleasure in their contemplation. But this is a vision that subordinates the designer to the design, one in which the designer is bound to the same wheel of inexorability that binds the rest of us.

If, on the other hand, the universe represents a deity's free creation, it is the principles that explain his *choice* that are of interest and compel attention. A universe in which necessity does not control creation must have presented itself to the deity as an immense ocean of possibilities, our own universe an island amid other possible islands, the whole archipelago arising from unfathomable nothingness. And those divine possibilities, so far as we can tell, must have been all equally likely.

God alone knows what God is thinking; as suffering men and women have long known, His inscrutability is one of His less attractive features. But if all options are equally likely, and no motives known, we are in the position of observers contemplating a vast, cosmic lottery, one whose outcome is neither favored by the odds nor specified by its designer. It is chance that now returns as the default hypothesis, if only because it is the only hypothesis that is completely consistent with our ignorance.

By this means, it might well seem, Monod's resilient double distinction, chance and necessity, returns to haunt the intellectual scene, with design, having been admitted as a possibility, once more in danger of collapsing along with the contested space between the two categories.

And Paley, poor Paley? Dead at last, or at least not very vigorously alive.

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"I Love Iraq, Bomb Texas"

Victor Davis Hanson

With this autumn's discussion in Washington over what to do about Iraq there arrived also the season of protests. They were everywhere. In the national newspapers, Common Cause published a full-page letter, backed by "7,000 signatories," demanding (as if it had been outlawed) a "full and open debate" before any American action against Iraq. More radical cries emanated from Not in Our Name, a nationwide "project," spearheaded by Noam Chomsky and affiliates, which likewise ran full-page advertisements in the major papers decrying America's "war without limit," organized "Days of Resistance" in New York and elsewhere, and in general made known its feeling that the United States rather than Iraq poses the real threat to world peace; at one late-October march in Washington, there were signs proclaiming "I Love Iraq, Bomb Texas," or depicting President Bush wearing a Hitler mustache and giving the Nazi salute. In the dock with America was, of course, Israel: on university campuses, demands circulated to disinvest from companies doing business with that "apartheid state"—on the premise, one supposes, that a democratic society with an elected government and a civilian-controlled military is demonic in a way that an autocratic cabal sponsoring the suicide-murder of civilians is not.

Writers, actors, and athletes revealed their habitual self-absorption. The novelist Philip Roth complained that the United States since September 11 had been indulging itself in "an orgy of national narcissism," although he also conceded, reclaiming his title as the reigning emperor of aesthetic narcissism, that immediately after the fall of the Twin Towers New York "had become interesting again because it was a town in crisis"—a fleeting, final benefit to connoisseurs of literature from the death of thousands. Barbra Streisand, identifying Saddam Hussein as the dictator of Iran, faxed misspelled and incoherent but characteristically perfervid memos to Congressmen, while Ed Asner, of sit-com fame, threatened publicly to "lose his soul" if we went into Iraq. The Hollywood bad boy Sean Penn, not previously known for harboring a pacifistic streak, demanded that the President cease his bellicosity for the sake of Penn's children. Traveling abroad, the actress Jessica Lange pertly announced: "It makes me feel ashamed to come from the United States—it is humiliating." And the jet-setting tennis celebrity Martina Navratilova, who fled here to escape Communist repression and has earned millions from corporate sponsors, castigated the repressive atmosphere of her adopted homeland, a country whose behavior is based "solely on how much money will come out of it."

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And so forth. Harbingers of this sort of derision were, of course, on view a year ago, in the period right after September 11 and well into the campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Thus, Michael Moore, currently making the rounds plugging his movie *Bowling for Columbine* and a sympathizer of Not in Our Name, bemoaned the 9/11 terrorists' lack of discrimination in their choice of target: "If someone did this to get back at Bush, then they did so by killing thousands of people who did not vote for him!" Norman Mailer, engagingly comparing the Twin Towers to "two huge buck teeth," pronounced their ruins "more beautiful" than the buildings themselves. In the *London Times*, the novelist Alice Walker speculated whether Osama bin Laden's "cool armor" might not be pierced by reminding him of "all the good, nonviolent things he had done." There was the well-known poet who forbade her teenage daughter to fly the American flag from their living-room window, the well-known professor who said he was more frightened by the speech of American officials than by the suicide-hijackers of 9/11, and the well-known columnist who decried our "belligerently militaristic" reaction to the devastation of that day.

Not all the criticism of the American response to terrorist cells and rogue governments has partaken of this order of irrationality; serious differences, responsibly aired, are also to be found, including in newspaper ads. But in the year since the slaughter of September 11 there has emerged an unpleasant body of sentiment that has little or nothing to do with the issues at hand but instead reflects a profound and blanket dislike of anything the United States does at any time. For a while, the *New Republic* kept track of this growing nonsense by Western intellectuals, professors, media celebrities, and artists under the rubric of "Idiocy Watch," and the talk-show host Bill O'Reilly is still eager to subject exemplars of it to his drill-bit method of interrogation. The phenomenon they represent has been tracked daily by Andrew Sullivan on his weblog and analyzed at greater length by, among others, William J. Bennett (in *Why We Fight*), Norman Podhoretz (in "The Return of the 'Jackal Bins,'" Commentary, April 2002), and Keith Windschuttle (in "The Cultural War on Western Civilization," the *New Criterion*, January 2002), the last-named of whom offers a complete taxonomy of schools and doctrines. And yet the sheer strangeness of the overall enterprise, not to mention its recent proliferation and intensification, would seem to merit another look.

A number of general truths emerge from any survey of anti-American invective in the context of the present world conflict. First, in each major event since September 11, proponents of the idea of American iniquity and/or Cassandras of a richly deserved American doom have proved consistently wrong. Warnings in late September 2001 about the perils of Afghanistan—the peaks, the ice, the warring factions, Ramadan, jihad, and our fated rendezvous with the graveyard of mighty armies gone before us—faded by early November in the face of rapid and overwhelming American victory. Subsequent predictions of "millions" of Afghan children left naked and starving in the snow turned out to be equally fanciful, as did the threat of atomic annihilation from across the border in Kashmir.

No sooner had that theater cooled, however, than we were being hectored with the supposed criminality of our ally Ariel Sharon. Cries of "Jeningrad" followed, to die down only with the publication of Palestinian Authority archives exposing systematic thievery, corruption, and PA-sanctioned slaughter. During the occasional hiatus from gloomy prognostications about the Arab-Israeli conflict, we were kept informed of the new cold war that was slated to erupt on account of our cancellation of the anti-ballistic-missile treaty with the defunct Soviet Union; of catastrophic global warming, caused by us and triggering floods in Germany; and always of the folly of our proposed intervention in Iraq.

That effort to remove a fascist dictator, we are now assured (most tediously by Anthony Lewis in the *New York Review of Books*), is destined to fail, proving instead to be a precursor to nuclear war and/or a permanently inflamed Arab "street." On the other hand, a *successful* campaign in Iraq, it is predicted, will serve only to promote America's worst instincts: its imperial ambition, its cultural chauvinism (a/k/a hatred of Muslims and Arabs), and its drive for economic hegemonism (a synonym for oil). Those who oppose preemption warn on Monday that the Iraqi dictator is too dangerous to attack and shrug on Tuesday that he is not dangerous enough to warrant invasion. Take your pick: easy containment or sure Armageddon.

The striking characteristic of such judgments is that they, too, are wholly at odds with the known facts. Confident forecasts of American defeat take no notice of what is the largest and best-trained military in history, and fly in the face of recent American victories in the Gulf war (where, at the time, Anthony Lewis likewise predicted quagmire

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and disaster) and Kosovo, both achieved at the cost of scarcely any American casualties. Alleged American hatred of Muslims hardly comports with our record of saving Kuwaitis from fascist Iraqis, Kosovars and Bosnians from Christian Serbs, or Afghans from Russian Communists and then from their own Islamist overlords, all the while providing billions of dollars in aid to Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority. It was Jordanians and Kuwaitis, not we and not Israelis, who ethnically cleansed Palestinians; Iraqis and Egyptians, not we, who have gassed Muslim populations. And it is to our shores that Muslims weary of Middle Eastern despotism are desperate to emigrate.

IS THERE a consistent theme here? We are talking, largely though not exclusively, about a phenomenon of the aging Left of the Vietnam era and of its various progeny and heirs; and once upon a time, indeed, the anti-American reflex could be linked with some rigor to the influence of Marxism. True, that particular religion, at least in its pristine form, is just about gone from the picture these days. Some of its fumes, though, still linger in the doctrines of radical egalitarianism espoused by postmodern relativists and multiculturalists and by now instilled, in suitably diluted and presentable form, in several generations of college and high-school students. Hence, for example, the regular put-down of George W. Bush as a "Manichean"—for could anything be more self-evidently retrograde than a view of our present conflict as a war of good versus evil, or anything more simplistic than relying on such "universal" arbiters of human behavior as freedom, pluralism, and religious tolerance?

Eschewing any reference to truths of this kind, adherents of postmodernist relativism assess morality instead by the sole criterion of power: those without it deserve the ethical high ground by virtue of their very status as underdogs; those with it, at least if they are Westerners, and especially if they are Americans, are ipso facto oppressors. Israel could give over the entire West Bank, suffer 10,000 dead from suicide bombers, and apologize formally for its existence, and it would still be despised by American and European intellectuals for being what it is—Western, prosperous, confident, and successful amid a sea of abject self-induced failure.

One is bound to point out that, as a way of organizing reality, this deterministic view of the world suffers from certain fatal defects, primarily an easy susceptibility to self-contradiction. Thus, a roguish Pinochet, who executed thousands in the name of "law and order" in Chile, is regarded as an incarnation of the devil purely by dint of his purportedly close association with the United States, while a roguish and anti-American Castro, who butchered tens of thousands in the name of "social justice" in Cuba, is courted by Congressmen and ex-Presidents even as Hollywood celebrities festooned with AIDS ribbons sedulously ignore the thousands of HIV-positive Cubans languishing in his camps. Kofi Annan gushes, Chamberlain-like, of Saddam Hussein, "He's a man I can do business with," while the ghosts of thousands slain by the Iraqi tyrant, many of them at his own hand, flutter nearby; for this, the soft-spoken internationalist is lionized.

Few have exploited the contradictions of this amoral morality as deftly as Jimmy Carter, who can parlay with some of the world's most odious dictators and still garner praise for "reaching out" to the disadvantaged and the oppressed. As President, Carter evidently was incapable of doing much of anything at all when tens of thousands of Ethiopians were being butchered; but as chief executive emeritus, he has managed to abet the criminal regime of North Korea in its determination to fabricate nuclear bombs and lately, having been rewarded with the Nobel Prize for peace, has brazenly attempted to thwart a sitting President's efforts to save the world from the Iraqi madman.

But all such contradictions are lightly borne. Since, for our postmodern relativists and multiculturalists, there can be no real superiority of Western civilization over the available alternatives, democracy and freedom are themselves to be understood as mere "constructs," to be defined only by shifting criteria that reflect local prejudices and tastes. Like Soviet commissars labeling their closed societies "republics" and their enslaved peoples "democratic," Saudi officials assert that their authoritarian desert monarchy is an "Islamic democracy"—and who are we to say them nay? ("To my ear," the *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof helpfully explains, "the harsh [American] denunciations of Saudi Arabia as a terrorist state sound as unbalanced as the conspiratorial ravings of Saudi fundamentalists themselves.") In Afghanistan, the avatars of multiculturalism and utopian pacifism struggled with the facts of a homophobic, repressive, and icon-destroying Taliban, but emerged triumphant: according to their reigning dialectic, the Taliban *still* had to be understood on their own terms; only the United States could be judged, and condemned, absolutely.

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As for the roots of elite unhappiness with America, this is a subject unto itself. It would hardly do to reduce everything to a matter of psychology: a whole class of unhappy individuals motivated by resentment over the failure of their society to fulfill their own considerable aspirations. Nor does it quite satisfy to say more globally, and theoretically, that they suffer at several removes from the paradoxes of the radical Enlightenment: the unquestioned belief that sweet reason alone, in the hands of its proper acolytes, and yoked to commensurate powers of coercion, can remake the world. But we need not discount other and much simpler factors—like the law of the pack.

As in the medieval church or among Soviet apparatchiks, the pull of groupspeak is always strong among compliant and opportunistic elites. For today's intellectuals, professors, and artists, being on the team pays real dividends when it comes to tenure, promotion, publication, reviews, lecture invitations, social acceptance, and psychic reassurance. And the dividends are compound: one is a lockstep member of one's crowd *and* one enjoys the frisson of dissidence, of being at variance, but always so comfortably at variance, with one's benighted fellow citizens.

Our unprecedented affluence also explains much, although its role as a facilitator has been relatively scanted in most discussions of anti-Americanism that I have seen. The plain fact is that civilization has never witnessed the level of wealth enjoyed by so many contemporary Americans and Europeans. Vast groups are now able to insulate themselves from the age-old struggle to obtain food, shelter, and physical security from enemies both natural and human. Obesity, not starvation, is our chief health problem; we are more worried about our 401(k) portfolios than about hostile tribes across the border.

What does this have to do with the spread of anti-Americanism? Home-grown hostility to American society and the American experiment is hardly a new phenomenon, but in the 19th century it tended to be limited to tiny and insulated elite circles (see the writings of Henry Adams). Now, it is a calling card for tens and hundreds of thousands who share a once rare material splendor. That brilliant trio of Roman imperial writers, Petronius, Suetonius, and Juvenal, warned about such *luxus* and its effects upon the elite of their era, among them cynicism, nihilism, and a smug and crippling contempt for one's own.

An ancillary sort of unreality has emerged in modern Western life alongside the reduced need to use our muscles or face physical threats. In a protected world, Saddam Hussein comes to seem little different from a familiar angry dean or a predictably moody editor, someone who can be either reasoned with or, if necessary, censured or sued. In this connection, it is not surprising that those most critical of America are not the purported victims of its supposedly rapacious capitalist system—farm workers, car mechanics, or welders—but more often those in the arts, universities, media, and government who have the time and leisure to contemplate utopian perfection without first-hand and daily exposure to back-breaking physical labor, unrepentant bullies, or unapologetically violent criminals. For such people, the new prosperity does not bring a greater appreciation of the culture that has produced it but rather enables a fanciful shift from thinking in the immediate and concrete to idle musings of the distant and abstract.

For many, today's affluence is also accompanied by an unprecedented sense of security. Tenure has ensured that tens of thousands of professors who work nine months a year cannot be fired for being unproductive or mediocre scholars, much less for being abject failures in the classroom. In government at every level, job security is the norm. The combination of guarantees and affluence, the joint creation of an enormous upper-middle class, breeds a dangerous unfamiliarity with how human nature really works elsewhere, outside the protected realm.

Such naiveté engenders its own array of contradictory attitudes and emotions, including guilt, hypocrisy, and envy. Among some of our new aristocrats, the realization has dawned that their own good fortune is not shared worldwide, and must therefore exist at the expense of others, if not of the planet itself.

This hurts terribly, at least in theory. It sends some of them to their fax machines, from where they dispatch anguished letters to the *New York Times* about the plight of distant populations. It prompts others, more principled and more honorable, to work in soup kitchens, give money to impoverished school districts, and help out less fortunate friends and family. But local charity is unheralded and also expensive, in terms of both time and money. Far easier for most to exhibit concern by signing an ostentatious petition against Israel or to assemble in Central Park: public demonstrations that cost nothing but seemingly meet the need to show to peers that one is generous, fair, caring, and compassionate.

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As if that were not hypocrisy enough, those who protest against global warming, against shedding blood for oil, or against the logging of the world's forests are no less likely than the rest of us to drive SUV's, walk on hardwood floors, and lounge on redwood decks. Try asking someone awash in a sea of materialism to match word with deed and actually disconnect from the opulence that is purportedly killing the world and its inhabitants. Celebrity critics of corporate capitalism neither redistribute their wealth nor separate themselves from their multinational recording companies, film studios, and publication houses—or even insist on lower fees so that the oppressed might enjoy cheaper tickets at the multiplex. Jessica Lange and Alec Baldwin so hate George W. Bush that they threaten to leave our shores—promises, promises.

An even less appetizing quality of the new privileged is their palpable and apparently unassuageable envy. Intellectuals and people in the arts are perennially surprised—no, outraged—to find that corporate managers and Rotary Club businessmen, with far less education and infinitely less taste than they, make even more money. To the guilt they feel over what they have is therefore added fury at those who not only have more but seem to enjoy it without a necessary and concomitant sense of shame. Worse yet, because America is still a plutocracy where riches and not education, ancestral pedigree, or accent bring status, it can be galling for a sensitive professor of Renaissance literature to find himself snubbed at dinner parties by his own university's president in favor of the generous but (shall we say) less subtle owner of a chain of Taco Bells. From there it is but a step to seeing the face of that same smiling and unapologetic plutocrat before him whenever he gazes upon the likeness of George W. Bush or Richard Cheney.

THIS BRINGS us to another element of the new anti-Americanism. All of us seek status in accordance with what we feel we have accomplished or think we know. This naturally selfish drive is especially problematic for radical egalitarians, who must suppress their own desire for privilege only to see it pop out in all sorts of strange ways. I do not mean the superficially incongruous manifestations: Hollywood actors in jeans and sneakers piling into limousines, Marxist professors signing their mass mailings with the pompous titles of their chairs, endowed through capitalist largesse, or the posh Volvos that dot the faculty parking lot. Rather, I have in mind the pillorying by National Public Radio of those who say "nucular" for "nuclear," the loud laments in faculty clubs over the threats posed to rural France by McDonald's, and all the other increasingly desperate assertions of moral and cultural superiority in a world where meaningful titles like earl, duke, and marquis are long gone and in theory repugnant. "Axis of evil? Totally banal," scoffed Felipe Gonzalez, the former prime minister of Spain, not long before his own country swaggeringly recaptured an uninhabited and rather banal piece of rock that had been briefly snatched by Morocco.

The superciliousness of the educated knows no end, and may even betray a final anxiety. One million bachelor's degrees are awarded in this country each year, but under the new therapeutic curriculum there is little to guarantee that any of the holders of these certificates can spell a moderately difficult English word or knows which dictator belongs to which enslaved state. And what is true of students is too often true as well of their pretentious professors, as can be seen whenever Noam Chomsky pontificates about war ("Let me repeat: the U.S. has demanded that Pakistan kill possibly millions of people . . .") and in place of references to historical exempla or citations from the literature raves on with "as I have written elsewhere," "there are many other illustrations," "as would be expected," "it would be instructive to seek historical precedents," "as leading experts on the Middle East attest," and all the other loopholes and escape clauses that are the mark not of a learned intellectual but of a calcified demagogue.

But who has time to acquire expertise or exhibit patience with human frailty? The innate limitations of mortals matter little to our irritated utopians, nor can moral progress ever be rapid enough to keep up with a definition of perfection that evolves as quickly as the technology of cell phones. That Afghanistan a mere year after the fall of the Taliban is not yet as tranquil and secure as New England proves that our postbellum efforts there are not much better than the Taliban. "No one," asserts Edward Said, "could argue today that Afghanistan, even after the rout of the Taliban, is a much better and more secure place for its citizens." No one? That we once *aided* Saddam Hussein is a supposedly crippling fact of which we are reminded ad nauseam, as if, not before but after the Gulf war, France, Russia, and Germany did not proceed to sell him the components for weapons of mass destruction, or as if we ourselves did not once give the Soviets a third of a million GMC trucks to thwart Hitler, only to see them used in the Gulag. But in the perfect world of America's critics, if Barbra Streisand can fly to Paris in four hours and fax

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her scrambled thoughts in seconds, and if Gore Vidal from his Italian villa can parse sentences better than the President of the United States, then surely we are terminally culpable for not having solved the globe's problems right now.

Is it because these elite Americans are so insulated and so well off, and yet feel so troubled by it, that they are prone to embrace with religious fervor ideas that have little connection with reality but that promise a sense of meaning, solidarity with a select and sophisticated group, moral accomplishment, and importance? Is it because of its very freedom and wealth that America has become both the incubator and the target of these most privileged, resentful, and unhappy people? And are their perceptions susceptible of change?

If the answer to the first two questions is yes, as I believe it is, then the reply to the third must be: I doubt it. The necessary correctives, after all, would have to be brutal: an economic depression, a religious revolution, a military catastrophe, or, God forbid, an end to tenure. At least in the near term, and whether we like it or not, the religion of anti-Americanism is as likely to grow as to fade.

But it can also be challenged. The anti-Americans often invoke Rome as a warning and as a model, both of our imperialism and of our foreordained collapse. But the threats to Rome's predominance were more dreadful in 220 B.C.E. than in 400 C.E. The difference over six centuries, the dissimilarity that led to the end, was a result not of imperial overstretch on the outside but of something happening within that was not unlike what we ourselves are now witnessing. Earlier Romans knew what it was to be Roman, why it was at least better than the alternative, and why their culture had to be defended. Later in ignorance they forgot what they knew, in pride mocked who they were, and in consequence disappeared.

The example of Rome, in short, is an apt one, but in a way unintended by critics who use passing contemporary events as occasions for venting a permanent, irrational, and often visceral distrust of their own society. Their creed is really a malady, and it cries out to be confronted and exposed.

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The Great Jewish Language War

Hillel Halkin

Man trakht un got lakht: man thinks and God laughs, the Yiddish saying goes. I grew up thinking of Yiddish as an enemy and am now (among other things) a translator of Yiddish literature. It was a hidden enemy, I should add, because as a boy in New York in the 1950's, I could not have said what the precise menace was of a language that arrived harmlessly at the front door every morning in the form of the *Morgn Zhurnal*, the daily Yiddish newspaper that my father subscribed to along with the *New York Times*. It was from the *Morgn Zhurnal*, which copied most of its news from the *Times* of the day before, that I learned Yiddish. Equipped with the previous day's *Times*, the German I was studying in high school, and a good Hebrew education, I taught myself to read it.

Yet Yiddish, the mother tongue of both my parents and a language used by them matter-of-factly when there was a need for it, was one of the few things that could get my father, an even-tempered man, visibly angry. My one childhood memory of him in a rage is of his shouting at Yiddish—or rather, at a friend of his named Ben Dworkin whose wife was the daughter of the Yiddish poet Solomon Bloomgarden, better known by the pen-name of Yehoash. I cannot remember exactly what Dworkin and my father were talking about, or what made my father lose his temper and begin to shout, but it was clear to me from their argument that Ben Dworkin and Yiddish were on one side of a great divide and my father was on the other.

In time, I came to understand that I had witnessed a minor clash in a great war—a war that for all practical purposes was over by the time this scene took place. This was the language war between Hebrew and Yiddish, itself part of the great cultural and political conflict between Zionism and "Diasporism" that sundered the Jewish world in the first decades of the 20th century, and that ended only when an even greater conflict left the European Diaspora in ruins beside a newborn state of Israel. My father, his subscription to the *Morgn Zhurnal* notwithstanding, was a Hebraist and a Zionist. Ben Dworkin was a Yiddishist. And long before I knew the meaning of that word, the shouting that night in a living room in which I had never heard shouting before told me that Yiddish, the enemy of my father, though admitted to our home every morning with the milk bottles like a servant given the run of the house, was my enemy, too.

This attitude lasted long past childhood—so much so that until the mid-1980's, I had hardly opened a Yiddish book. I, who had studied English literature at great universities, had read everything

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by Jewish authors like Kafka and Babel and Bellow, and was a lover and professional translator of Hebrew literature, had never read a Yiddish line by Sholem Aleichem, a Yiddish story by I.L. Peretz, or a Yiddish poem by Ya'akov Glatshtein or Moyshe-Leyb Halpern or Avraham Sutzkever. And not only had I never explored Yiddish literature, much less realized that it constituted one of the most glorious chapters in the history of Jewish creativity, I had instinctively shrunk from it as I never shrank from the *Morgn Zhurnal*. One might consort with the enemy's servants. One did not consort with the enemy himself.

The war between the supporters of Hebrew and of Yiddish that lasted roughly from 1900 to 1940 was one of the great Kulturkämpfe, the nonviolent civil wars, of Jewish history. At its most intense it rivaled in bitterness the 9th-century schism between Karaites and Rabbanites, or the late-18th-century conflict of Hasidim and their opponents the Mitnagdim. Unlike these, however, it did not pit something unequivocally new in the Jewish world against something unequivocally old. Yiddish and Hebrew had coexisted symbiotically for nearly a millennium, ever since Yiddish first developed in German-speaking lands of Europe as a Jewish dialect rich in Hebrew vocabulary. The two languages had achieved this coexistence by dividing Jewish life between them, with Hebrew serving for liturgy, religious ritual, sacred text, rabbinic discourse, and formal literature, and Yiddish for speech, folklore, and written communication and simple prayer among the less educated, and particularly among women. As the two languages fully complemented each other, there was no cause for friction between them.

In this respect, the bonding of Yiddish with Hebrew was like that of other languages spoken by large numbers of Jews after Hebrew lost its vernacular status in antiquity. Hebrew and Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek, Hebrew and Arabic, Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish—though each of these partnerships had its distinctive features, a similar pattern prevailed in all. In each case, Hebrew retained its position of *leshon ha-kodesh*, a sacred but colloquially defunct language of revelation and high culture, while its partner was *la'az*, an originally foreign but now domesticated vulgate used for all ordinary purposes and generally containing a sufficient proportion of Hebrew words to set it off from the speech of one's non-Jewish neighbors.

The traditional relations between Hebrew and its vernacular partner could be characterized—and were—by means of different metaphors. The two languages could indeed be compared to a master and a servant, the vernacular performing life's daily chores under the supervision of the superior tongue that assigned them. Or they could be likened to two social castes, one upper, priestly, and brahmin, the other lower, laic, and plebeian. Or they could be imagined as a husband and wife, the former following higher pursuits while the latter ran the household. Or as *s'fat avot*, the "language of the fathers" and of stern masculine duty, and *mamaloshen*, the maternal tongue of love and warmth.

Such comparisons, indeed, were more than mere metaphors. The structure of Jewish life was such that, although everyone prayed in *leshon ha-kodesh* and spoke *la'az*, the adepts and main users of Hebrew were the rabbis, the wealthy, the educated, and the menfolk, while those whose lives were largely restricted to the vernacular were the poor, the unschooled, and the women.

Of course, the lines were never rigidly drawn. The servants were always sneaking, as it were, into the master's bedroom, the masters poking around the kitchen when the servants were not around. Already in the Bible we find erotic love poetry—the Song of Songs—in Hebrew and apocalyptic prophecy—parts of the book of Daniel—in Aramaic; and alongside the many post-biblical Jewish religious texts of the Hellenistic period that were written in Greek, there is a Hebrew volume from that age called *Sefer ha-Razim*, "The Book of Secrets," in which you will find all the black magic needed for success at everything from philandering to playing the ponies. There are numerous such examples throughout Jewish history, many of them fascinating and all of them exceptions proving the rule.

Yet only in the case of Hebrew and Yiddish did these border crossings, at first minor, lead to hostile raids; then to massive incursions; and finally to all-out hostilities. Like two peoples who have lived together peacefully for centuries under imperial control, only to turn on each other in a spirit of combative nationalism with the empire's collapse, Hebrew and Yiddish ultimately went to war.

This, too, is more than a mere metaphor—for if the "empire" to which Hebrew and Yiddish owed allegiance is but a figure of speech for the rabbinic culture that regulated traditional Jewish bilingualism, the nationalism that disrupted this empire was literal. It was part of the great wave of nationalism that swept Europe in the 19th century as real empires began to crumble—the Napoleonic, the Hapsburg, the Ottoman, the Czarist—and as the Jews

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joined the universal struggle for recognition and self-determination.

There was no room for bilingualism in this struggle. European nationalism was an offspring of European romanticism, and like its parent, radically monistic. "One people, one language, one land" was the rallying cry of every national movement in Europe, a collectivized version of the romantic vision of autarkic selfhood. For late-19th- and early-20th-century Jewish nationalism, this meant living in Hebrew or in Yiddish, not in both. Either the people who spoke Yiddish would create a literature and a high culture in it, or the people whose high culture and literature were in Hebrew would learn to speak it again. In either case, the old order had to go.

IT IS beside the point to look for the historical aggressor or aggressed-against in this war. Although it is common, and perhaps natural, to think of Yiddish as the revolutionary challenger and Hebrew as the ancien régime under attack, that is to take a simplistic view. Both languages, each in its way, were enlisted in support of revolution *and* tradition. If Yiddish was championed as a live vernacular overthrowing the oppression of a mummified holy tongue, or as the voice of the Jewish worker and woman demanding access to privileges long denied them by a Hebraic ruling class, it was also the flag of those who wished to stay safely put in a familiar Diaspora rather than make a bold new start in Zion as Hebrew-speaking pioneers.

The two languages' conflict, which began casually and escalated, took place with great symmetry. The first modern Yiddish invasion of the Hebraic domain of belles lettres, the sentimental novels of the Vilna author Isaac Meir Dik, commenced in the 1850's; the first Hebrew-speaking society in Eastern Europe was founded in 1862 in the Galician city of Brod. In 1864 there appeared Yiddish literature's first aesthetically accomplished work of fiction, S.Y. Abramovitsh's *Dos Kleyne Mentshele*; in 1879 came the earliest serious proposal, put forth in an essay by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, to reinstitute Hebrew as a spoken language in the land of Israel. In August 1897 the first Zionist Congress, most of its delegates ardent Hebraists, convened in Basel; a month later, the anti-Zionist Yiddisher Arbiter Bund, henceforth Yiddishism's main political arm, was founded in Vilna. By the first decade of the 20th century, a serious Yiddish literature was flourishing in Eastern Europe; in the same decade, Jewish children were talking Hebrew to each other on a daily basis in the agricultural colonies of Palestine. In 1907, Poalei Zion, the less militantly Hebraistic of the two major Palestinian Jewish workers' parties, declared Hebrew the exclusive language of the Yishuv; in 1908, at a much-celebrated conference in Czernowitz, Yiddish authors like Sholem Asch, Chaim Zhitlovsky, and Hirsh-Dovid Nomberg fought for a (narrowly defeated) resolution proclaiming Yiddish the sole national language of the Jewish people.

Czernowitz and the debate it engendered, though their importance was more symbolic than practical, have been spoken of as signaling the formal outbreak of hostilities between the two languages. True, of the great Yiddish literary triumvirate of Abramovitsh (or Mendele the Book Peddler, to use his pen name), Sholem Aleichem, and I.L. Peretz, only Peretz was in attendance there, but for him it indeed marked a watershed. Until then he had been a fully bilingual writer, publishing many of his stories first in Yiddish and then, rewritten, in Hebrew, and many others first in Hebrew and then, rewritten, in Yiddish. Now, he declared in an address to the conference, "The Jews are one people—their language is Yiddish." Moreover, Peretz told the delegates, if Yiddish was to replace Hebrew as the national language of the Jews, it would first have to appropriate the Hebraic heritage—to accomplish which, he continued, "I propose the translation into Yiddish of all the cultural assets of our golden past, above all those of the Bible—*iber-hoypt fun der bibl*."

Nearly a century later, Peretz's choice of words still lacerates. Not the *tanakh*, not *kisvey ha-koydesh*, not any of the other Hebrew or Hebrew-derived words by which Yiddish speakers, including Peretz himself, traditionally referred to Hebrew Scripture, but the *bibl*, a thoroughly Christian term that no Yiddish speaker ever used. Whether or not he consciously intended to stab Hebrew, a language he loved, in the heart, he could not have found a more cruelly pointed stiletto.

In point of fact, the Hebrew Bible had already been translated into old Yiddish in the 16th and 17th centuries. Nor was Yiddish the first *la'az* language into which the Bible was put by Jews, having been preceded by Greek, Aramaic, and Arabic. The rabbis, while making their peace with such translations, well understood their dangers. (Of the earliest of them, the Greek Septuagint, they had said that the day of its appearance was "as intolerable for Israel as the day the golden calf was made.") And yet none had ever been part of a supercessionist program to supplant Hebrew in the name of the Jewish people. None was deliberately patricidal. None aspired not only to push back Hebrew's fron-

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tiers, but to sack its ancient citadel by turning its Book of Books, to which every previous *la'az* translation had been but an approach, into an abandoned ruin, a purely archeological site: a *bibl*!

In the years between Czernowitz and his death in 1915, Peretz personally began his project of Bible translation with the five scrolls of Esther, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Ruth, and the Song of Songs, leaving it to others to carry out the bulk of the work. The task was taken up by Yehoash, the father-in-law of my father's friend Ben Dworkin. Yehoash was a lyric poet with a religiously devotional bent who did not mean to offend Jews like my father by carrying out Peretz's program. But my father was a *ba'al korei*, a reader of the Torah in the synagogue, and a man who knew the Hebrew Bible practically by heart. Although it hurt his intellectual pride to admit it, he too had a devotional soul, and it sometimes poured out absentmindedly.

One of these times was late Saturday afternoons, when he would sit in the darkening living room, watching the Sabbath ebb away and singing the 23rd Psalm to a melancholy melody he knew from childhood. "A Psalm of David: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters." That is the King James Version, and it sounds pretty good to me. The Hebrew sounds better. Recently I came across Yehoash's Yiddish translation of this psalm. *Af grozike fiterpletser makht er mikh hoyern, bay ruike vasern tut er mikh firn*: the fat Germanic syllables made me think of a Lutheran pastor. "*Di bibl! Di bibl!*," something shouted in me, just as my father had shouted at Ben Dworkin. How I take his side even now.

But let us leave the great language war at Czernowitz and skip its worst years, those in which it became brutally politicized and, in the Soviet Union and to a lesser extent in Jewish Palestine, reached an extreme of "linguistic cleansing." It is hardly necessary to judge these years, since history has done it for us. The Hebrew revival triumphed in Israel. Yiddishism breathed its tortured last—quite literally shot to death—at the 1952 trial of Yiddish writers in Moscow. To read the minutes of this trial, made available in English last year, is to weep once for the fate of the fine writers condemned by it and a second time for what these men were reduced to: groveling betrayers of themselves and their comrades. And it is to weep a third time, and longest of all, for the gullibility of the large part of the Jewish people taken in for so many years by the fraud of the Great October Revolution and its deceitful promises of Jewish cultural independence in the Soviet Union.

That Yiddishism became tragically identified with this revolution can be explained not only by its ideologically leftward drift in the years after Czernowitz but by the steady demographic and economic erosion of Yiddish life in Eastern Europe and the United States in the period between the two world wars, to the point that only a totalitarian state supporting and enforcing Yiddish culture seemed to many Yiddish writers and intellectuals capable of stemming the tide. But the Hebraists were right. Hebrew alone was the eternal language of the Jews. In the best of circumstances—which, alas, did not prevail—Yiddish was doomed in modern times to go the way of all the *la'az* languages of the past. Those who, failing to understand this, acted as the political and intellectual accomplices of the liquidation of Jewish culture in Russia, and of the worldwide Communist campaign against Zionism and Israel, did become, for the most part unwittingly, the enemies of their own people.

But return for a moment to the pre-Czernowitz Peretz. There is a little story of his called *Sholem Bayis* or "A Happy Family," published in both Hebrew and Yiddish in 1901, whose ending depends on the different nuances of two synonymous Hebrew and Yiddish words. In this story a simple Jew, a water carrier, is hurt to the quick when told by a rabbi—demeaningly, so he thinks—that, in paradise, the wife he loves and is happily married to will be his *fisbenkele*, his footstool.

Yet the rabbi has meant no disrespect. On the contrary: knowing he is facing an uneducated man, he has simply translated into Yiddish for his benefit the biblical expression *hadom-ragloyim*—which, though it indeed means "footstool," occurs grandly in such verses as Isaiah's "Thus saith the Lord: the heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool," and the Psalmist's "Exalt ye the Lord our God and worship at His footstool." A *hadom-ragloyim* is no lowly *fisbenkele*. It is the resting place of God. Although the rabbi may be placing the water carrier's wife in a position of subservience to her husband, it is the subservience of elevation. But the simple water carrier, unaware of the word's biblical resonance, takes "footstool" quite literally and returns home to protest to his wife that he will never agree to live in paradise unless he can sit by her side.

The two perspectives, however, are not just the rabbi's and the water carrier's. They are those of Peretz's two versions of "A Happy Family" themselves. For whereas the Yiddish version has only the word *fisbenkele* and not *hadom-ragloyim*, the He-

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brew version has the reverse. The Hebrew story, in other words, is closer to the point of view of the rabbi, who is not to blame for an ignorant Jew's comical misunderstanding, while the Yiddish story, egalitarian and feminist in its sympathies, is told through the water carrier's eyes. You have to read both to get the whole point.

Although a particularly salient example, "A Happy Family" is typical of the ways in which, when it came to prose fiction, Yiddish and Hebrew had different dispositions from the start. The former was more naturally suited to representing ordinary social situations, the latter to conveying the inner life of the Jew steeped in the associative wealth of tradition. And this was especially so because, until at least the 1920's, the spoken Hebrew revival in Palestine was expressively limited and could not be used effectively in fictional dialogue. This was an awkward situation for the Hebrew writer and one that was often handled by relying heavily on indirect discourse, keeping mimetic representation of actual speech to a minimum.

Reinforcing this was the fact that the two languages appealed, in Eastern Europe, to different audiences. Hebrew readers were themselves products of a rabbinic education, which alone enabled a Jew to acquire a literary knowledge of the language. Although they commonly turned to secular Hebrew literature as an escape from the rabbinic mind, they retained, often unconsciously, many of that mind's values and were heavily preoccupied with elitist issues of religious faith, Jewish identity, and cultural authority and authenticity. Yiddish readers, a far larger public, were more concerned with everyday social and economic concerns. A curious result of this is that, in the years before World War I, when both Hebrew and Yiddish literature were still largely confined to Eastern Europe and/or to the life of East-European Jewry, the two languages continued, despite their intense rivalry, to observe something of the old division of labor. For while they were now in direct competition, and were being used to describe the same world, it was not a world described from the same vantage points.

TAKE, FOR example, the character known in Hebrew literary criticism as the *talush*, the "lost soul." This is characteristically a young Jew who has had a rigorously religious upbringing; experienced heights of adolescent piety; been sent, in recognition of his intellectual talents, to study at a yeshiva, the traditional institute of Jewish higher learning; lost his faith in God in a crisis of intellectual maturation that eventually leads to the abandonment of his religious studies and observance; retained, however, amid the emptiness of loss, a fierce sense of Jewish allegiance; and now drifts, a proud and lonely figure, on the margins of Jewish society, unable to reconnect with the tradition he has broken with or to assimilate into the non-Jewish world.

"I write," writes Yirmiyah Feuermann, a typical *talush* and the narrator of Yosef Chaim Brenner's autobiographical Hebrew novel *In Winter* (1901), "for myself and in secret"—and indeed Yirmiyah lives largely in silence, having no one to talk to. And yet while such figures are so common in pre-World War I Hebrew fiction that you might assume them to be the representative type of their generation—there are recurrent variations of them not only in Brenner but in at least a half-dozen other major Hebrew writers—you can search the Yiddish literature of the period practically in vain for them.

No, the Yiddish literature of this period talks obsessively. It talks, quite literally, most of the time, a high proportion of its pages consisting of dialogue or monologue—sometimes, as Abramovitsh's Mendele the Book Peddler says of himself in the late Ted Gorelik's magnificent translation of *Fishke the Lame*, until "the gab is sure to come running out at my mouth apace, like meal out the bottom of a tore bushel sack of feed." It talks because this is what ordinary Jews do when they get together, and because it is bursting with the liberating realization that this talk—this servant talk—is at last fit matter for the printed page.

Here, in Gorelik's translation, is Mendele introducing Fishke to us—or rather to the friend to whom he is telling the tale:

> At the brick bathhouse in Glupsk, a young feller I know has been earning his keep for the longest time now, from ever since he was little. Name of Fishke, Fishke the lame, to be more precise, on account of him being crippled, you see. Ever hear of him? No; thought not. . . . So, who's this Fishke feller anyway? You're maybe asking, I mean, where'd the feller come from? how'd he come to be there, in such a place? Well, sir, somehow it just never occurred to anybody, nor to me, to even ask. So that part of it's a blank, pretty much. Though what else you expect? For here you have this poor article of humanity knocking about the place; and maybe he's even got a name—say, Fishke, or whatever—but, well, after all, he's no different from any of the rest of the wretched cast-offs in our midst which are his equal, and which are

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> forever cropping up among us; and seemingly overnight, as well, and fully formed, like so many mushrooms after a rain, with all their features and parts already pricked out, and in place. . . . See, there are all these poorfolk amongst us have taken to nesting in every sort of odd out-of-the-way hovel and hole-in-the-wall cubby, where they quietly breed away unseen, bringing babies into the world in dark squalor. And, well, whyever shouldn't they?

And now listen to what happens when this same passage is translated into Hebrew by Abramovitsh himself twenty years later, and then retranslated by me:

> In the bathhouse in Kislon [Mendele's Hebrew name for Glupsk] there was a lame fellow named Fishke, a fixture from the time he was young. Just who and whence was he? That's a question neither I nor anyone asked. What did it matter? So God's world also had in it a Fishke, one more wretched soul no different from all the others who sprout like so many shiny toadstools or mushrooms, so that, though each has a form, a complexion, and even thoughts of his own, you hardly notice him or how he's grown. Our beggars are begotten and betake themselves to their dark corners to beget more beggars on the sly, and who even knows they're there? Let them spawn to their hearts' content!

Abramovitsh's Hebrew was as innovative as his Yiddish, and was greatly admired by his contemporaries for its richly layered ease. And yet even when he is talking, the Hebrew Mendele is being essayistic. He is less verbally impetuous than his Yiddish counterpart, less comically entangled, more concisely calibrated and judiciously balanced. Like Peretz but more so, Abramovitsh—who began writing in Hebrew, then shifted to Yiddish to compose all his major works, and then rewrote these works in Hebrew—is the same and yet a different author in each language. It was this difference, in part, that impelled him to go back and forth between the two languages, because he could not be his full self in only one of them.

Nor was he alone in this. Apart from Peretz, Mendele, and (to a lesser extent) Sholem Aleichem, the number of bilingual Hebrew/Yiddish authors around the turn of the 20th century is staggering. By no means were all of these writers equally committed to both languages. Many experimented briefly with one before settling permanently on the other, choosing it because they felt it expressed their deeper selves—because they were Zionists or Diasporists, or because they identified with Jewish tradition or revolutionary socialism, or simply because they were living in a Hebrew or Yiddish environment. Indeed, in the years right before and especially after World War I, as Yiddish and Hebrew began losing their *stylistic* complementarity, they took on a new *geographical* complementarity, Hebrew literature coming to convey the experience of Jewish Palestine and Yiddish literature that of Eastern Europe and the United States.

Still, there was no end of exceptions, zigzags, more complex loyalties. Sholem Aleichem, who wrote little in Hebrew, was a Zionist; Peretz, who wrote much in it, was not. Uri Nisan Gnessin traveled to Palestine in 1907, wrote from there to his father, "The Jewish soul is in the Diaspora, not here," and proceeded to return to Russia, where he wrote his great Hebrew novellas. The essayist Hillel Zeitlin vigorously defended rabbinic Judaism—in Yiddish. In 1919 the Hebrew fiction writer Eliezer Shteinman published a Hebrew manifesto in Russian entitled "The Hebrew Communist" and calling for "a red Hebrew culture." Avraham Sutzkever has lived in Israel for the past 55 years while writing poetry in Yiddish alone. Gabriel Preil, a shy and secluded New Yorker, was still publishing wonderful verse in both languages in the 1980's, long after the Hebrew and Yiddish literary scenes had both vanished from the city. The young Uri Tsvi Greenberg wrote expressionist Yiddish poetry in Warsaw after World War I and was prominent in Yiddish literary circles. In 1923, he said goodbye to all that in a poem entitled "In the Kingdom of the Cross" and left for Palestine within the year, where he joined the ultra-nationalist Zionist Right—which in those days led, sometimes violently, the fight against Yiddish. Most of his verse was henceforth in Hebrew, but he never stopped writing Yiddish poems and in 1939 he was briefly back in Poland editing a Yiddish newspaper.

Such inconsistencies were legion. They point to the fact that, although the Hebrew-Yiddish language war was real, it was not fought by the real writers. It was fought by the ideologues, the politicians, the organizers, the theoreticians, the literary hacks. It is no accident that every one of the important Soviet Yiddish writers, many of whom—in the early years, at least—were true believers in the revolution, kept away from the anti-Hebrew campaign conducted by the Yevsektsia, the "Jewish division" of the Communist party; no accident that when, in 1927, the faculty of the Hebrew Universi-

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ty in Jerusalem was fractiously split by a proposal to establish a chair in Yiddish studies, the poet Chaim Nachman Bialik, the very symbol and pride of Hebrew literature, came out (albeit unsuccessfully) in favor.

Whatever their politics, the Jewish writers of Eastern Europe did all they could to avoid being torn apart by the bitterly contested divorce of Yiddish and Hebrew. Many refused to choose between them. Many who did choose, chose heavy-heartedly; their selection of one language was not a rejection of the other. How does a writer reject a father-tongue or a mother-tongue?

The most tragic thing about the language war was that it pitted one Jewish nationalism against another, the most Jewish Jews against the most Jewish Jews. Yet it was not a war between two literatures. The truth of the matter is that there never were two literatures. In the words of a 1918 essay by Ba'al Makhshoves, the pen-name of the Yiddish literary critic Isidor Elyashev:

> [W]e have two languages and a dozen echoes from other foreign languages, but . . . we have only one literature. And therefore the reader who seeks to become acquainted with the currents of Jewish life, to comprehend the spirit of the Jewish individual and multitude and how they find expression in Jewish literature, that reader does not separate Hebrew writers from Yiddish ones. . . . All are representatives of our literature, all embody a piece of Jewish life in their writings; all of them are Jewish artists.

I WOULD like to second the motion. The great language war between Hebrew and Yiddish is over, but against the advisement of Ba'al Makhshoves, it has left behind it a map with a partition line. On one side we have the Jewish Commonwealth of Hebrew Letters; on the other, the Jewish People's Republic of Yiddish Literature. Although the borders between the two are open and travelers can and do cross them, each country retains its own government, its own customs officials, and its own police force—or, to step out from behind the metaphor, its own departments of literature, curricula, scholars, and critics. Sholem Aleichem? Down the hall and to the left. Agnon? That's at the other end of the campus.

I do not make light of the need for institutional frameworks and academic specialization. Nor does teaching Sholem Aleichem and Agnon in different survey courses necessarily mean erecting an iron curtain between them. But what do we do with Peretz? Teach the Yiddish *Sholem Bayis* and the Hebrew *Sh'lom Bayit*, as it is nowadays pronounced in Israel, in different buildings too? Create the fiction, more fictional than anything Peretz ever wrote, that these are stories written by two different authors and that a *fisbenkele* and a *hadom-ragloyim* never meet? Or the even greater fiction, widely accepted today, that there is only one Peretz, a Yiddish one, of whom the Hebrew Peretz was a mere shadow?

Of course, Peretz is a special case; he turned his back on Hebrew at Czernowitz, and the institutions of Hebrew literature have retaliated by neglecting him to this day. But the institutions of Hebrew literature have also been, to this day, antagonistic toward Yiddish literature as a whole. They have viewed it—as I did, too, for many years—as a Hebrew literature manqué, a literature that would have been written in Hebrew had only its writers understood their national duty. Much of it has never been adequately translated into Hebrew; little of it has been absorbed by the Israeli literary consciousness; almost none of it is taught in Israeli schools. Great Jewish novelists and poets like Sholem Asch, Moyshe Kulbak, and Katya Molodovsky are not thought of by Israel's intellectuals as being "ours" in the way that Agnon or Brenner or Leah Goldberg are.

And yet not only are they "ours," they grew up in one house with Agnon, Brenner, and Goldberg and had the same parents. The very differences between Hebrew and Yiddish writing—what I have called their complementarity—only demonstrate that they are two halves of one whole. Of what other two literatures can this be said? You do not need to be familiar with Dickens's London in order to know Balzac's Paris, but you are not fully acquainted with Sholem Aleichem's Kasrilevke unless you have also been to Agnon's Szybusz.

NEVERTHELESS, THE Jewish language war had to be fought. It had a right side and a wrong side. It was a conflict between two political and cultural conceptions of the Jewish future, of which one represented a catastrophic misjudgment.

At bottom, Yiddishism was a radical amputation of Jewish peoplehood and Jewish history. In place of Hebrew, the only language common to Jews in all times and places, it proposed a Judeo-German that most parts of the Jewish world did not speak. From the demographic mosaic of that world, with its Sephardic Jews, Middle-Eastern Jews, Central Asian Jews, Italian Jews, French Jews, Dutch Jews, Middle-European Jews, and English-speaking

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Jews, it crowned as the "real" Jews the Yiddish-speaking population of Russia, Poland, Romania, and the Baltic states alone. Eastern Europe, a region first settled by Jews in the Middle Ages, was now the true Jewish homeland. And of a Jewish past 3,000 years old, the first two-thirds, in which Yiddish did not exist as a language, was to be effectively discarded.

Peretz's "The Jews are one people—their language is Yiddish" was an absurd self-contradiction. But the attitudes of Yiddishism live on, not only in the voguish sentimentality of much of the current revival of interest in the Yiddish language but in Jewish intellectual circles as well. And for that reason, Yiddishism can be said to have survived the disappearance, in all but ultra-Orthodox circles, of Yiddish itself.

These attitudes, in their contemporary form, can be enumerated. They include the belief—buttressed by the seemingly endless Arab-Israeli conflict—that Zionism was a mistaken political strategy for the Jewish people; that a strong identification with Israel need not be a central feature of Diaspora Jewish life; that minority status in the Diaspora is the optimal Jewish cultural and spiritual condition; that the political interests of Diaspora Jews lie in the forging of alliances with as many "progressive" and left-wing causes as possible; that solidarity with non-Jewish victims of capitalism, colonialism, racism, and other injustices is more important than solidarity with other Jews; and that the very notion of other Jews, of that *klal yisra'el* or collectivity of the Jewish people that all Jews are responsible to, can be trimmed at will to suit one's ideological proclivities.

Few serious Yiddish writers would have shared these attitudes. The distinction between Yiddish culture on the one hand and, on the other, Yiddishism or the neo-Yiddishism that has succeeded it, is elementary. If I myself needed many years to realize this, that is perhaps only because, as a boy in my family's living room, I heard the shots of a small skirmish at the end of a long war and mistook the nature of the foe.

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Saddam and the Palestinians

Efraim Karsh

AMONG THE arguments that have been advanced against the Bush administration's policy on Iraq, few have resonated more widely, or among a more diverse set of critics, than the idea that the U.S. must at least attempt to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before confronting Saddam Hussein.

To do otherwise, one version of this argument holds, would be clear evidence of an American "double standard" when it comes to enforcing the most solemn resolutions of the United Nations. As the Palestinian spokesman at the UN recently declared, "It is very difficult for the streets of the Arab world to believe that the use of force against Iraq . . . would be a way of upholding international legality and legitimacy . . . when all the Arabs, nay, all the world, have seen the resolutions of the [Security] Council being violated and rejected" by Israel. The charge of American hypocrisy on this issue has become a commonplace in Paris and Brussels, and has even been broached by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, President Bush's staunchest ally in the campaign against Saddam. In a speech to the Labor party conference in early October, Blair contended that the relevant UN resolutions must apply no less to the Arab-Israeli conflict than to Iraq, declaring the current situation in the Middle East to be "ugly and wrong."

In a more pragmatic vein, several prominent figures, from former President Bill Clinton to such elder statesmen of the Republican party as James Baker and Brent Scowcroft, have cautioned against mounting a military assault on Iraq without Arab support—support contingent on addressing the Palestinian problem. As Scowcroft wrote in an impassioned and much-commented-upon article in the *Wall Street Journal*,

> If we were seen to be turning our backs on that bitter conflict—which the region, rightly or wrongly, perceives to be clearly within our power to resolve—in order to go after Iraq, there would be an explosion of outrage against us. We would be seen as ignoring a key interest of the Muslim world in order to satisfy what is seen to be a narrow American interest.

If nothing else, Scowcroft concluded, an attack on Iraq now, with the peace process at an impasse,

> would stifle any cooperation on terrorism, and could even swell the ranks of the terrorists. Conversely, the more progress we make in the war on terrorism, and the more we are seen to be committed to resolving the Israel-Palestinian issue, the greater will be the international support for going after Saddam.

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In brief, the case for "linkage"—for tying the war effort against Iraq to the resolution of the Middle East conflict—springs from claims of both high principle and geopolitical prudence, and carries with it the imprimatur of respected friends of the Bush administration. And there is no denying the argument's success, as evidenced most clearly by the President's own readiness, during UN debate over Iraq in late October, to dispatch a high-level envoy to Jerusalem bearing yet another "road map" for a two-state solution. There is also no way around the fact that, in almost every particular, the argument is demonstrably, even invidiously, wrong.

TO BEGIN with, the UN resolutions concerning Iraq differ root and branch from those concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. When the Security Council decided to resist Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait more than a decade ago, it invoked rarely used powers under the UN Charter's chapter seven, issuing what amounted to an international declaration of war against the Iraqi regime. Since then, every measure the UN has taken against Iraq—including the cease-fire after the Gulf war, the inspections regime, and sanctions—has been binding, as a matter of international law, on every member of the world organization.

By contrast, the many Security Council resolutions dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict, stretching back to 1967, have drawn their authority from the UN Charter's chapter six, which concerns the peaceful resolution of conflicts. These resolutions have the status of recommendations, not of law; they are binding on no one. Even more to the point, whereas the resolutions concerning Iraq have been directed at a single rogue regime, and demand that it alone take certain actions, those on the Arab-Israeli conflict provide for a *multilateral* framework, urging negotiations and delineating the broad contours of a possible peace settlement. They apply simultaneously to all the parties, not just to one of them.

That having been said, there can also be no doubt about which side in the Arab-Israeli conflict has done more to comply with the letter and spirit of the UN proposals.

The main resolution, number 242, was passed by the Security Council in November 1967 in the wake of the Six-Day war, and established the principle of "land for peace" as the cornerstone of future Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. Israel, for its part, was asked to withdraw "from territories occupied in the recent conflict"—the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. (The absence of the definite article "the" before "territories"—which, had it been included, would have required a *complete* Israeli withdrawal—was no accident; the resolution, issued a mere six months after Israel's astounding triumph over the concerted Arab attempt to obliterate the Jewish state, reflected an awareness of the existential threat posed by its pre-1967 boundaries, memorably described by the Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban as "Auschwitz borders.") The Security Council expected negotiations between Israel and the Arabs to produce a more defensible frontier, one consistent with, in the resolution's other key formulation, the right of every state in the region "to live in peace with secure and recognized boundaries."

During the 35 years since the passage of resolution 242, Israel has persistently striven to make peace with its Arab neighbors, to little avail. In the aftermath of the Six-Day war, the only Arab leader prepared to risk his rule by endorsing the resolution was Anwar Sadat of Egypt, who in 1979 signed a full-fledged peace treaty.* In return, Israel withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula, constituting more than 90 percent of the territories occupied in 1967. Repeated efforts to induce the Syrian president, Hafez al-Assad, to follow in Sadat's footsteps came to naught. During the 1990's, four successive Israeli prime ministers offered peace initiatives based on complete withdrawal from the Golan Heights, and each time Assad declined.

As for the Palestinians, their rejection of resolution 242 was no less categorical, at least for a time. In 1967, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) rejected the UN proposal as a "Zionist plot." As an official PLO statement put it:

> This resolution was concocted in the corridors of the United Nations to accord [with] the Zionist racist colonial illegal occupation in Palestine. . . . Acceptance of the provisions embodied in this resolution is a treasonable act not only against the Palestinian people but against the whole Arab nation.

It was only in 1988, more than two decades after the resolution's passage, that the Palestine National Congress begrudgingly accepted resolution 242. Remarkable as this decision appeared at the time, however, it reflected no real change of heart by the PLO. Shortly after the session, Salah Khalaf, Yasir

* King Hussein of Jordan made peace with Israel in 1994, but only after the Gulf war and the signing of the Oslo accords had made such an overture relatively safe.

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Arafat's second in command (better known by his nom de guerre of Abu Iyad), declared: "The establishment of a Palestinian state on any part of Palestine is but a step toward the [liberation of the] whole of Palestine." Two years later, following the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait (which the PLO openly endorsed), he reiterated this view at a public rally in Amman, pledging "to liberate Palestine inch by inch from the [Mediterranean] sea to the [Jordan] river."

Despite the obvious bad faith of the Palestinians, the Israeli government decided to enter into peace negotiations with the PLO in 1993, and signed the Oslo accords. In the following years, Israel consistently fulfilled its part of the bargain, and by 1997 had given Arafat's newly established Palestinian Authority full control over virtually the entire Arab population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as some 40 percent of the land, as a prelude to final-status negotiations. Four years later, Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Arafat a complete end to the Israeli presence, ceding virtually the entire West Bank and the Gaza Strip to the nascent Palestinian state and making breathtaking concessions with respect to Jerusalem. Arafat's response was war, and at a level of local violence unmatched in scope and intensity since the Arab attempt to abort the creation of a Jewish state in 1948.

There is, in short, abundant evidence of hypocrisy when it comes to respecting UN resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict—but the guilty parties are hardly Israel and the United States.

NO LESS illuminating is the actual history of the notion that Saddam Hussein's fate is linked to that of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Indeed, this is a claim that the Iraqi dictator himself made with some success more than a decade ago, only to falsify it repeatedly in both word and deed.

During the months of negotiations with the Kuwaitis before his invasion in 1990, Saddam made no mention of Palestine. Once confronted with a firm international response, however, he immediately opted to "Zionize" the crisis. His "peace initiative," as he called it, consisted of a comprehensive solution for "all issues of occupation, or the issues that have been depicted as occupation, in the entire region." The first item on his list: "the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories in Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon." After this and other problems had been satisfactorily settled, he proclaimed, "an arrangement for the situation in Kuwait" could be reached.

By linking his Kuwaiti venture to the Palestinian problem, Saddam aimed to portray himself as the champion of the pan-Arab cause. If, as he claimed, the "restoration of Kuwait to the motherland" was the first step toward "the liberation of Jerusalem," how could any Arab leader be opposed to it? What is more, with the Arab world behind him, how could the Western powers think of opposing him by force of arms?

To Saddam's undoubted delight, the first breach in the Western coalition soon followed. Though the Anglo-American presumption from the beginning of the crisis was that Iraq's withdrawal could be secured only by the threat of blockade and war, the French, then as now, had other ideas. The Iraqi ambassador passed word to the French government that some overt gesture might provide Saddam with an opportunity to extricate himself from Kuwait, and François Mitterrand seized the bait. In an address to the UN General Assembly, while demanding that Saddam withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait, the French president also appeared to recognize the legitimacy of some of Iraq's territorial claims and, more importantly, suggested that the resolution of the crisis should be followed by a comprehensive peace conference on the Middle East.

Though the Americans were appalled by Mitterrand's speech—Secretary of State James Baker described it as "an appeasement speech, like those heard in Europe in the 1930's"—the first President Bush himself used the same forum to make a similar statement just a week later. After reiterating his administration's hard-line policy, he surprised many at the UN by arguing that an Iraqi withdrawal would pave the way for, among other things, "all the states and peoples of the region to settle the conflict that divides the Arabs from Israel." A few days later, the British foreign minister seconded Mitterrand's call for a wider Middle East peace conference.

What explained these extraordinary concessions? If the French genuinely expected that Saddam might relent, the Bush administration and the British were under no such illusion. Their concern, rather, was that Saddam would succeed in driving a wedge between the West and its Arab allies. As the Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz told Secretary of State Baker during a tense meeting in Geneva on the eve of the Gulf war:

> The [Arab] leaders might tell you that they would fight on your side, but when a war breaks out between an Arab and Muslim country on the one hand, and foreign powers . . . on the other, combatants will not keep in mind

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> that they will be fighting to vindicate UN resolutions. . . . Against the backdrop of your ties with Israel, I would like to tell you in all sincerity that if you initiate military action against an Arab country, you would be faced with hostile sentiment in the region, and in many Muslim states as well.

The problem with this bluster—and with the readiness of the U.S. to heed it—was that the Arab states themselves refused to play along. They dismissed Saddam's "peace" plan as the ploy it obviously was. "Saddam's initiative contravenes what the Arab and Islamic nations had agreed unanimously," declared Egyptian Foreign Minister Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "namely, an immediate Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait." Though yielding to no one in its hatred of Israel, Syria, through its state-controlled media, was even more pointed in its criticism of Saddam:

> The appalling attempt to link the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories is not only a falsehood but also a weak excuse for the continuation of the invasion. . . . After all, how can we equate Kuwait, the fraternal Arab country, with Israel, the Arabs' archenemy?

In the end, and despite the fretting of the U.S. State Department, most of the key Arab states had no compunction about fighting alongside the West to liberate Kuwait. Nor did the anti-Iraq coalition collapse when Saddam, in a desperate bid to widen the conflict, fired 39 Scud missiles at Israel—a development cheered by the Palestinians and by demonstrators in marginal states like Yemen but otherwise greeted with conspicuous calm by the proverbially restive Arab "street." Not a single Arab regime was swept from power following its participation in the war, and most of them reaped handsome dividends. Egypt had much of its foreign debt forgiven, Syria obtained tacit international acquiescence in its domination of Lebanon, and the Gulf states saw Saddam Hussein, the most lethal threat to their independent existence, defanged, at least for the moment.

THE GULF war neatly illustrated a fundamental if too often disregarded fact of modern Middle Eastern politics: that the Arab states have never had any real stake in the "liberation of Palestine." Though anti-Zionism has been the core principle of pan-Arab solidarity since the mid-1930's, it has almost always been an instrument for achieving the self-interested ends of those who proclaim it.

Consider, for instance, the pan-Arab invasion of the newly proclaimed state of Israel in 1948. This, on its face, was a shining demonstration of solidarity with the Palestinian people. But the invasion had far less to do with winning independence for the indigenous population than with the desire of the Arab regimes for territorial aggrandizement. Transjordan's King Abdallah wanted to incorporate substantial parts of mandatory Palestine into the greater Syrian empire he coveted; Egypt wanted to prevent that eventuality by laying its hands on southern Palestine. Syria and Lebanon sought to annex the Galilee, while Iraq viewed the 1948 war as a stepping stone to its long-standing ambition to bring the entire Fertile Crescent under its rule. Had the Jewish state lost the war, its territory would not have fallen to the Palestinians but would have been divided among the invading Arab forces.

As occupiers after 1948 of, respectively, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, neither Egypt nor Jordan ever allowed Palestinian self-determination. Their purposes were better served by forcing the Palestinian refugees to remain in squalid, harshly supervised camps, where they could serve as a rallying point for anti-Israel sentiment. "The Palestinians are useful to the Arab states as they are," was the candid response of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser to an inquiring Western reporter in 1956. "We will always see that they do not become too powerful. Can you imagine yet another nation on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean!"

The Palestinians, for their part, came to despise their supposed protectors, and occasionally, if futilely, lashed out at them. When Yasir Arafat's PLO attempted to overthrow the Hashemite monarchy of Jordan in September 1970, King Hussein had no qualms about slaughtering thousands of Palestinians. Neither did Hafez al-Assad have any such qualms during his campaign from 1976 onward to subordinate Lebanon to Syria's rule, and neither did the Kuwaitis in the winter of 1991 when they took revenge for the PLO's support for Saddam's brutal occupation of their country.

Even more relevant, considering both present circumstances and his ostentatious appropriation of the Palestinian cause in 1990, is Saddam Hussein's own long history of treating that cause with indifference, if not outright hostility. Saddam stood firmly against Iraqi intervention to aid the Palestinians in Jordan during the "Black September" of 1970, and subsequently sought to exclude Palestinians from coming to work in Iraq's booming, oil-rich economy. Though a vociferous critic of Anwar Sadat for reaching a separate peace with Israel in

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1979, Saddam quickly reconsidered when he discovered a need for Egyptian military aid, and toiled tirelessly for Egypt's readmission into the Arab fold.

Indeed, to the horror of Palestinian nationalists, Saddam has never hesitated over the years, when it has served his aims, to seek accommodations with the "Zionist entity" itself. Prior to the Gulf war, he worked to win Israeli acquiescence in the laying of an Iraqi oil pipeline to the Jordanian port town of Aqaba, collaborated with Israel against Syrian interests in Lebanon (to punish Assad for his support of Iran), and even attempted to acquire sophisticated Israeli military equipment. In 1984, Saddam went so far as to voice public support for peace negotiations with the Jewish state, emphasizing that "no Arab leader looks forward to the destruction of Israel" and that any solution to the conflict would require "the existence of a secure state for the Israelis."

TODAY, OF course, just like a decade ago, the Iraqi dictator is taking a rather different line; but it is all part of the same game. No sooner had President George W. Bush declared his "war on terrorism" and singled out Iraq as a pivotal member of the "axis of evil" than Saddam intensified his efforts to identify his cause, once again, with that of the Palestinians. Iraq disbursed large sums of money to Palestinian terrorist groups, and the families of suicide bombers were rewarded to the tune of $25,000 apiece, often in televised ceremonies held beneath Saddam's portrait. Meanwhile, the state-controlled Iraqi media have underscored the shared destiny of the two nations. As one spokesman put it, "The aim behind the idea of aggression against Iraq is to divert attention from the Zionist and U.S. crimes that are being committed in Palestine."

That some version of this view has once again found support in the West is clear. No less clear, however, is the strong likelihood that in a second Gulf war, as in the first, the Arab states would set aside the Palestinian cause without hesitation if they thought it served their own interests. In this connection, the chief burden for the U.S. is not to ensure that there is at least the appearance of "progress" between the Israelis and Palestinians, as many commentators have urged and as even the Bush administration seems to think necessary, but rather to make plain its own determination to finish the job in Iraq. The Arab states would not stand in the way of a campaign to topple Saddam Hussein; they are understandably reluctant to join another effort merely to chasten him.

By rejecting the spurious "link" between Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Bush administration would also send a salutary message to the Palestinians. The pretense of pan-Arab solidarity has long served as a dangerous elixir in Palestinian political circles, stirring unrealistic hopes and expectations and, at key junctures, inciting widespread and horrifically destructive violence. The sooner the Palestinians recognize that their cause is theirs alone, the sooner will they make their own peace with the existence of the state of Israel and understand the necessity of a negotiated settlement.

Most important of all, by moving resolutely ahead in its confrontation with Saddam Hussein, the Bush administration would set an instructive precedent for the region as whole. For the "Bush doctrine," too, has a notion of linkage, under which no regime countenancing terror and aggression ought to feel safe.

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MUSIC

Gouldism

Terry Teachout

IN THOMAS Harris's best-selling 1988 horror novel *The Silence of the Lambs*, Hannibal Lecter, a psychiatrist turned serial killer, tells his captors that he is willing to help them track down another murderer in return for certain privileges. Among them is music in his cell: "Glenn Gould, *The Goldberg Variations*? Would that be too much?" Lecter's request is granted, and (both in the novel and in the 1991 Oscar-winning film version) Gould's recording can be heard in the background as the good doctor slaughters his insufficiently wary guards and escapes into the night.

This passing reference in a novel and movie is noteworthy not merely because classical music usually plays so minor a role in American popular culture but also because it offers a glimpse of the extent to which the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould, who died twenty years ago this October, succeeded in worming his way into that same culture. At first glance, Gould seems an unlikely pop-culture hero. A reluctant performer who suffered from chronic stage fright, he stopped giving public concerts in 1964, and few of his American admirers ever saw him play (though he appeared with some regularity on Canadian TV). His repertoire was narrow and determinedly intellectual, consisting mainly of the music of Bach, Beethoven, Haydn, Hindemith, Mozart, and Schoenberg. No more uncompromising artist has ever lived—yet Gould was, and is, one of the best-known classical musicians of the 20th century.

From 1964 on, Gould's reputation was sustained almost entirely through his recordings, and in particular through his first commercially released LP. This was the version of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* done by the then twenty-two-year-old pianist for Columbia in 1955, five months after his American debut performances at Washington's Phillips Collection and New York's Town Hall. The album has never been out of print, and though Gould came to dislike the interpretation and re-recorded the work a year before his death, it is the earlier version with which he continues to be identified. In the words of the music critic Tim Page:

> [I]t quickly became one of those rare classical recordings that were deemed bona-fide intellectual *events* by the public at large. If you were young in the 1950's, and you attended the films of Bergman and Fellini, were hip to the existentialists in Paris and the "Beats" on the road, and followed the daunting stylistic twists and turns from John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and other modern jazz artists, it was more than likely that you were a Gould fan as well. . . . His playing had the same sort of tough/tender dichotomy exemplified by such cultural icons as Marlon Brando and James Dean.

This somewhat breathless but basically accurate tribute comes from the liner notes that Page has written for *Glenn Gould: A State of Wonder*, a new three-CD set containing remastered versions of the 1955 and 1981 recordings of the *Goldberg Variations*, a 1982 radio broadcast in which Page interviewed the reclu-

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sive pianist about his decision to re-record the work, and twelve minutes' worth of hitherto unreleased outtakes from the sessions for the 1955 version.[1] Given the long-standing availability of both recordings, one would expect the market for so arcane a reissue to have been limited, but within days of its release in September, *Glenn Gould: A State of Wonder* became the fastest-selling classical album in the world.

What made Gould's *Goldbergs* so popular that they could be plausibly incorporated into the cultural décor of *The Silence of the Lambs*? Why are they still so popular today? The answers, not surprisingly, have almost as much to do with extra-musical factors as with purely musical ones.

As I have had occasion to note previously, Columbia Records seized upon Gould's myriad eccentricities as fodder for a promotional campaign designed to publicize its newest artist.[2] This campaign succeeded beyond the label's wildest dreams. From 1955 on, Gould was as well known for his personal peculiarities—his chronic hypochondria, his insistence on singing along with his playing and sitting on a low-slung, homemade folding chair instead of a standard piano bench, his promiscuous use of tranquilizers and sleeping pills—as for his piano playing.

Over time, still another side of Gould emerged. He had always liked to write, and once he retired from the concert stage, his output of essays, articles, reviews, and radio and TV broadcasts for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation increased sharply.[3] Willy-nilly, he came to be seen as a kind of philosopher, a hermit (in the religious sense of the word) who espoused a homemade doctrine of noncompetition and spiritual quietism rooted in the belief that "technology possesses a mediative power which can minimize or even eliminate the competitive follies which absorb so large a share of human activity." It was for this reason, he claimed, that he chose to withdraw from the artistically self-destructive arena of public performance and devote himself exclusively to recording and broadcasting.

Such ideas resonated perfectly with the communitarian *Zeitgeist* of the 1960's. Three years after Gould's retirement from the stage, the Beatles, the most influential rock band of the period, would record *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, an album making use of studio-based techniques that could not be reproduced in live performance. With its release, the Beatles stopped giving concerts, thereafter appearing only on record, in films, and on TV. Like Gould, they had opted out of the most frenzied aspects of pop-culture celebrity—in the process becoming, of course, even bigger celebrities.

Gould eventually began to attract admirers whose interest in his work and thought had cult-like aspects. In 1978, a Canadian professor of philosophy named Geoffrey Payzant published *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind*, a book whose animating premise seemed to be that Gould's philosophy, were it to be widely adopted, might redeem the world:

> Glenn Gould's writings and recordings are evidences of his intention to separate music from cruelty, to show that competitiveness is not a law of civilized life. Nature may be red in tooth and claw, and competition in the struggle for survival may be a law of nature, but technology (Gould says) intervenes in human culture between man and nature, between man and the beastliness that is in men (at least in the hearts of men such as sit in audiences at concerts and bullfights).

Since his death, Canadian cultists have also produced such articles of worship as *Northern Music: Poems About and Inspired by Glenn Gould* (2001), an anthology whose contents are adequately described by its title, and *Thirty-Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* (1993), a pretentious feature film directed by François Girard in which Gould's oft-catalogued oddities are dramatized with a cloying affection that makes them seem like nothing so much as the characteristic behavior of a higher form of life.

IT IS no accident that Gould's homeland should have become a center of "Gouldism." He is, after all, the only indisputably major classical instrumentalist to have been born and trained in Canada, a country whose provincial culture is widely felt, not least by expatriate Canadians themselves, to be inimical to world-class achievement in the arts. Very often, ambitious Canadian artists who feel stifled by their society's comfortable and self-consciously noncompetitive atmosphere go elsewhere—generally to the United States—in order to advance their careers, a decision for which they are invariably resented by those who stay behind. By contrast, Gould not only chose to live in Canada but glorified its cultural values, of which he plainly considered himself a shining exemplar.

In fact, Gould's philosophy of noncompetition was nothing more than a rationalization of his fear of public performance—or, indeed, of anything that might threaten his deep-seated need for rigid control over every detail of his life. (In a rare unguarded moment, he told the violinist Yehudi Menuhin that "what technology is all about is the elimination of risk and danger.") Accordingly, he shunned physical contact with other people and lived largely as a recluse. When he gave "interviews" to the press, he wrote out the questions and answers in advance. His "friendships" consisted of endless late-night monologues

[1] Sony Classical Legacy S3K 87703.

[2] See my essay, "Two Fallen Stars" (COMMENTARY, July 1998), which also contains a selected discography of other important Gould performances currently available on CD.

[3] Gould's prose writings are collected in *The Glenn Gould Reader* (1984), edited by Tim Page.

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conducted by telephone, and the surest way to lose him as a friend, by most accounts, was to contradict or correct him. Most disturbingly, he was a lifelong prescription-drug abuser who refused psychiatric treatment even when his emotional problems effloresced into psychotic episodes.[4]

The radio interview included in *Glenn Gould: A Sense of Wonder* offers an unintentionally revealing look at how Gould chose to present himself to the world. His stilted exchanges with Tim Page bear no resemblance to the informal give-and-take of an actual conversation; even if one did not know that the interview was fully scripted, it must be plain to the most naive listener that at the very least it was carefully rehearsed. Nor is it possible for Gould to conceal his obvious discomfort at the necessity of interacting with another human being. Instead, he sounds like a humorless, self-obsessed man attempting without success to simulate wit and warmth.

It is no less revealing to turn from this interview to Page's recollections of the circumstances under which the event took place:

> Glenn was dressed in his usual summer wear—two sweaters, a woolen shirt, scarf, gloves, a long black coat, and a slouch hat. Moreover, he looked decidedly unwell: his face a mask of bleached parchment, his hair coming out in clumps. Gone was the extraordinary-looking youngster—ethereally beautiful rather than traditionally handsome—who had once dazzled audiences throughout the world with the brilliance and audacity of his playing. In his place was a wise, gentle, stooped man who seemed much older than his 49 years, with the air of a delicate visitor ready to cast off his wasted body and metamorphose as pure spirit.

Tim Page, it should be noted, is a music critic of high distinction, not given to inappropriate enthusiasms or easily dazzled by mere charisma. Yet he writes about Gould (who was, to be sure, a personal friend) less as a cool-headed observer than as a wholehearted celebrant of the cult of Gouldism, confident that his idol is not as other men.

THAT THERE was, however, far more to Gould than Gouldism is made incontrovertibly evident by listening to the 1955 recording of the *Goldberg Variations*, the first CD in *Glenn Gould: A State of Wonder*. No matter how thoroughly one knows this miraculous performance—and I have listened to it any number of times—the textural clarity and rhythmic propulsion of Gould's playing never cease to come as a surprise. In Page's words:

> [I]t was unprecedentedly aggressive on one level, searching and achingly vulnerable on another. The recording heralded a new approach to Bach's keyboard music—it combined the stark, separate contrapuntal voicings so easily delineated on the harpsichord with the tone color and dynamic calibration available from the modern piano. Never before had this music been played with such dazzling and incisive virtuosity. . . . Gould's Bach swung like mad.[5]

Gould's Bach did indeed represent a new approach, one that had little in common with any existing Bach performance tradition—though to call it anti-romantic, as many have done, is to miss the point. For while he broke with older styles of Bach interpretation, playing with a lightness and crispness of articulation unheard-of in the 1930's and 1940's, he did so not as a baroque-music specialist seeking to reconstruct "authentic" 18th-century performance practice but as a radical individualist beholden only to his own musical ideas—in other words, as a romantic.

To hear Gould's hushed, inward playing of the intensely chromatic minor-key Variation 25, the emotional center of the *Goldbergs*, is to recognize the truth of his own claim that his playing aspired to the condition of religious ecstasy:

> I believe that the justification of art is the internal combustion it ignites in the hearts of men and not its shallow, externalized, public manifestations. The purpose of art is not the release of a momentary ejection of adrenaline but rather the gradual, lifelong construction of a state of wonder and serenity.

Paradoxically, Gould's repudiation of then-current ideas about how to play Bach was made easier by the provincialism of the musical culture in which he was reared. Had he studied at New York's Juilliard School or Philadelphia's Curtis Institute, like most of the well-known American pianists of his generation, he would have been indoctrinated in the "international style" that dominated classical-music performance after World War II, one in which regional idiosyncrasies of style were largely suppressed. While there was nothing specifically Canadian about his style, which was wholly of his own making, it must have owed something to his having grown up in a country that was off the beaten path of musical modernity.

But what worked to Gould's advantage in his youth became problematic later on. After 1964, he never again performed with other musicians except from a position of absolute artistic control. Nor did the producers of his records dare to challenge his artistic decisions,

[4] Disturbing descriptions of Gould's behavior can be found in Andrew Kazdin's *Glenn Gould at Work: Creative Lying* (1989), a memoir by the producer of most of Gould's recordings, and Peter F. Ostwald's *Glenn Gould: The Ecstasy and Tragedy of Genius* (1997), a biography-memoir by a professor of psychiatry and amateur musician who was friendly with Gould from 1957 to 1977.

[5] "He had time like a jazz musician," the jazz critic Gene Lees (who also knew Gould) has similarly observed.

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however bizarre they might be—and some of his later recordings of the music of Mozart and Beethoven are quite comprehensively bizarre. Having cut himself off from the exterior stimuli that most artists require in order to grow, he could draw only on his interior resources, and in the end these proved unequal to the task of self-renewal. His last significant recording, the 1981 remake of the *Goldberg Variations*, is not an improvement on its predecessor but an arbitrarily alternative interpretation, more studied and less spontaneous (especially in the opening aria, which he plays almost exactly half as fast in 1981 as he did in 1955).

IN THE end, and despite all the problems posed by his life and work, Glenn Gould is as central to the culture of classical music today as he was a half-century ago—not because of the triumph of his half-baked ideas, or because he has become a pop-culture icon, but solely on account of the enduring fascination exerted by his records. For in an age of homogenized interpretation, and at a time when the classical recording industry is all but dead, Gould's best recordings are making a powerful impression on a new generation of listeners. In that most important of senses, he is as alive in 2002 as he was in 1981, or 1955.

One may quarrel with much of what he *wrote* about music, just as one may dismiss many of his recordings as misbegotten and unconvincing. Above all, one may take the strongest possible issue with the cult of Gouldism, whose appeal is essentially nonmusical. But even at his most obstinately perverse, Gould never failed to be interesting, and when he was good, as he was in the incomparable 1955 recording of the *Goldberg Variations*, no pianist—and no classical performer of any kind—has ever been better.

This is why he is still remembered, and will continue to be remembered long after most of his contemporaries have been relegated to footnotes in the history of musical performance. Apocryphal though it no doubt is, the remark attributed to the conductor George Szell after his first encounter with Glenn Gould is nonetheless the exact truth: "That nut's a genius."

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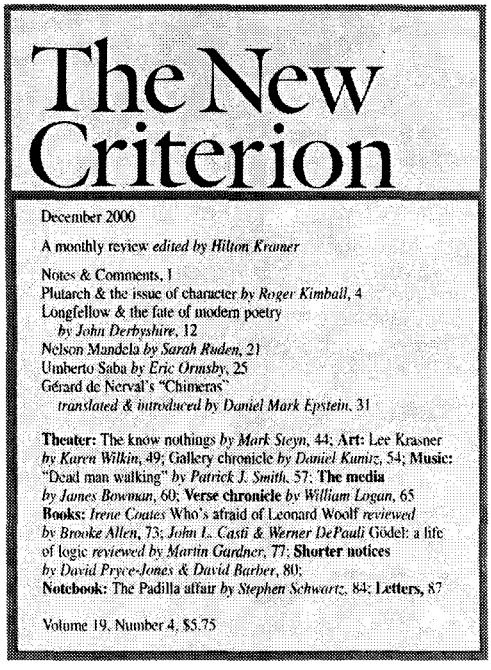
edited by Hilton Kramer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December 2000

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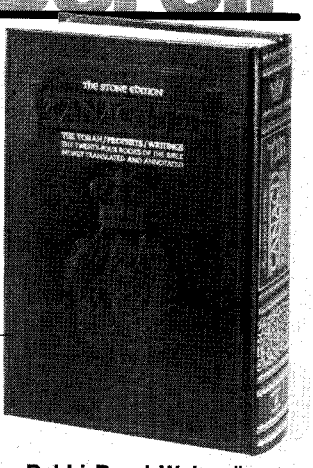

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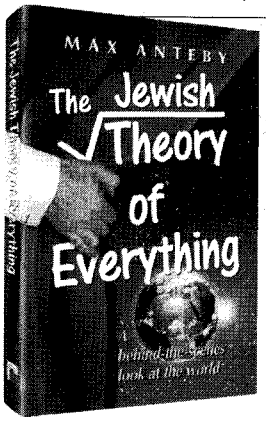

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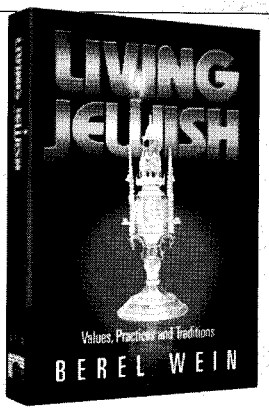

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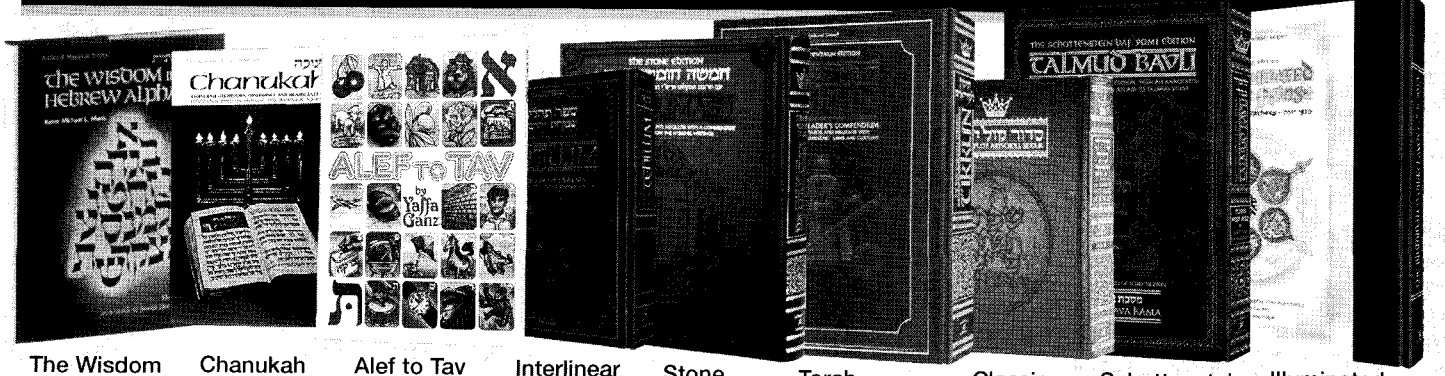

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Books in Review

No God but Mummy

I Don't Know How She Does It:
The Life of Kate Reddy,
Working Mother
by Allison Pearson
Knopf. 352 pp. $23.00

Reviewed by
Kay S. Hymowitz

THE IDEA that women can "have it all" has seen better days. Each season seems to bring forth some new and ominous study, pointing to the deficiencies of day-care or the alarming incidence of childlessness among women in the top ranks of business and the professions. Making matters worse, several high-profile role models—presidential adviser Karen Hughes, ABC News commentator Cokie Roberts, Massachusetts Governor Jane Swift—have lately thrown in the professional towel, declaring (as Roberts put it), "I want a life."

Allison Pearson's best-selling novel, *I Don't Know How She Does It*, is yet another contribution to the deflation of career mothers, but of a decidedly different sort. An award-winning columnist for London's *Evening Standard*, Pearson has written a sympathetic send-up, or what reviewers, alluding to another recent comic import from Britain, have described as a *Bridget Jones's Diary* for grown-ups. Both books share a hyperactive, pastiche style, their pages festooned with e-mails, to-do lists, diary entries, and sentence fragments too frenzied to mention their subjects. But Pearson has given us something deeper than the meditations of the self-consciously single Bridget Jones, and her book's popularity, I suspect, has to do with more than its obvious pleasures as entertainment.

PEARSON'S HEROINE, Kate Reddy, is a type easily recognizable to Americans. A graduate of an elite university, where she studied hard and went on the usual protest marches, she is now a hedge-fund manager and the mother of two young children. She and her husband Rich—an "ethical architect" whose generosity and sense of humor make him an ideal partner in "shared parenting"—live in an old house in an upscale neighborhood of London, alongside other young couples preoccupied with such things as getting their children into big-name nursery schools and renovating their kitchens.

When we first meet Kate, it is 1:37 A.M. on a Monday, she has just returned from a business trip to the U.S., and she is gamely trying to give a "distressed" look to some packaged mince pies, hoping they will pass for homemade at the school Christmas party of her five-year-old daughter. Staggering through her days in a "lead suit of sleeplessness," Kate knows that she is more hostage than boss to her children's nanny, the tyrannical and overpaid Paula (or, as she sometimes thinks of her, "Pol Pot"). Even with the help of Paula and the ever-patient Rich, our heroine's mind is an exhausting clutter of mommy trivia: hamsters, Teletubby birthday cakes, Christmas presents for the in-laws, the endless baby gear for vacationing with her one-year-old ("Louis XIV traveled lighter than Ben").

Where Kate shines brightest is in

KAY S. HYMOWITZ *is a contributing editor of* City Journal.

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her position as a hedge-fund manager at Edwin Morgan Forester, one of London's "oldest and most distinguished institutions." Her bosses depend on her to travel on a moment's notice to Stockholm or New York to seduce prestigious clients with her command of the Asian markets and, she realizes full well, her shapely legs. EMF has a supercharged, macho climate—its meetings are like the "gorilla grooming sessions you see on wildlife programs"—and Pearson peoples it with a host of familiar types: Chris Bunce, the drugged-out "bastard in residence" who once spiked with vodka a bottle of Kate's breast milk stored in the company's refrigerator; Rod Task, her hyperaggressive Australian boss; and Candy, the tough-as-nails, miniskirted American who shares with Kate the X-rated details of her love life.

Pearson exploits the clash of Kate's two worlds to considerable comic effect, often managing at the same time to be quite touching. Kate's computer password at work is a reminder to buy diapers ("Ben Pampers"); in the middle of a pitch for a $300-million deal in New York, she looks down to see that she still has "bouncy tent" written across her knuckles, the contraption she had planned to book for her daughter's birthday party; at home, while checking stock prices on the Teletext, she reads to her son from a saccharine storybook called "Guess How Much I Love You?"

Kate is the first to recognize her own failures. She is, she confesses, a "double agent" who has to "lie for a living"—to her boss about why she is late during a nanny crisis, to her children about whether she will be home that evening, and to her own mother, who believes her daughter has found bliss in working motherhood. Kate feigns sleep in order to avoid her amorous husband, knowing that it will save her from having to take the time to shower in the morning. She hides in the downstairs bathroom to steer clear of her breakfast-plastered toddler, worried that he will mess up her work clothes. And she knows little about how her daughter passes her days.

WITH ITS stock characters and predictable plot twists, *I Don't Know How She Does It* often has the canned feel of something written with Hollywood in mind (Pearson has already turned the novel into a screenplay for a $2-million advance). Pearson's wit and eye for detail compensate somewhat for this weakness, but her prose at times too closely resembles the ramblings of her protagonist: manic, overly ambitious, crammed with a forced humor that screams "Please like me!"

Worse, the novel has clearly been designed to flatter the elite women likely to be its readers. Though Kate's life is undoubtedly a mess, her intelligence and earthiness carry her through. She is rich but reassuringly self-conscious about it, neglectful of her children but wracked with guilt, decked out in Armani and high-tech business gear but unimpressed by it all. The combination is at once very appealing and deeply improbable, especially for a woman in Kate's high-powered job.

What redeems *I Don't Know How She Does It*, and makes it of more than passing interest, is Pearson's candor in presenting the very real tensions in Kate's life. Pearson was inspired to create her protagonist, she has said, by a survey showing that women today believe they have it tougher than their own mothers. "Why," she wondered, "has this great experiment come at such a cost?"

On the evidence of her novel, Pearson seems to believe that today's working mothers are afflicted not only by guilt but by the unsatisfied impulses of maternal love, a longing whose sensuousness and emotional intensity she deftly captures. Coming home too late to see her children, Kate smells their clothes in the hamper; weekends with them, she says, are like an illicit love affair crammed into two days, filled with "passion kisses, bitter tears, I love you, don't leave me, you like him more than me, take me to bed." Nor does she have any illusions about how her young daughter views her career. "Unfortunately, the case for equal opportunities [for women], long established in Western societies, cuts no ice in the fundamentalist regime of the five-year-old. There is no God but Mummy and Daddy is her prophet," Kate quips, but she cannot protect herself from the reality of her daughter's pain.

In short, Kate struggles with the challenge of love and finds herself wanting. Pearson does not go easy on men in her novel—the guys in Kate's office are brutes and her husband Rich, for all his virtues, is a bit passive-aggressive—but in the end she cannot bring herself to blame them for her protagonist's unhappiness. Kate and her children long for each other because Kate is never with them, and she is never with them because she has chosen not to be.

Pearson describes primal feelings that for many years have been off limits in polite company and certainly were not to be spoken of in the presence of our newly "empowered" daughters. This is not to say that *I Don't Know How She Does It* is a brief for stay-at-home moms; one of the concluding chapters is titled "No Easy Answers," and it is clear that Kate is too restless and competitive to keep out of the fray for very long. But the novel is a firm rejection of the idea that motherhood is nothing more, as some would have it, than a patriarchal "social construct." As Kate sighs at one point, "Women carry the puzzle of family life in their heads, they just do."

You will not find much about this in the reviews of *I Don't Know How She Does It*, which for the most part have simply praised it as a

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witty depiction of the life of one stressed-out working woman. But Pearson's insight undoubtedly helps to explain the novel's success. Even if American women do not like the idea of the relentless pull of maternal love, they do seem, finally, to be buying it.

Regime Change

The Threatening Storm:
The Case for Invading Iraq
by Kenneth M. Pollack
Random House. 384 pp. $25.95

Reviewed by
Frederick W. Kagan

The invasion of Iraq is an essential requirement of American and global security. That is not simply because Saddam Hussein possesses chemical and biological weapons, or even because he is actively working to acquire nuclear weapons. It is because he is a violent megalomaniac determined to recast the Middle East in his image and willing to use absolutely any means to do so, even if it results in his own destruction.

This is the conclusion propounded with great force, care, balance, and articulateness by Kenneth Pollack in *The Threatening Storm*. A CIA analyst specializing in the Middle East prior to the Gulf war of 1991, Pollack was among those who at that time warned of the impending danger, to no avail. Subsequently he served in the Clinton administration in a variety of posts, including as director for Gulf affairs at the National Security Council. Although he does not here comment upon or criticize the unwillingness of either Bill Clinton or the pre-9/11 George W. Bush to focus on Iraq, much less to recognize the

Frederick W. Kagan *is an associate professor of military history at West Point.*

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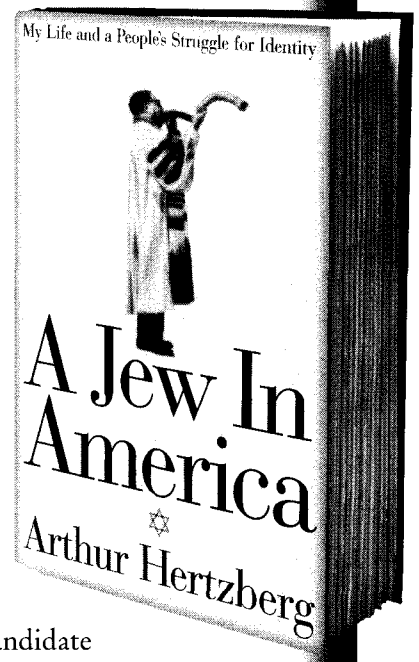

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weakness and failures of American policy in the region, he puts his formidable expertise and rhetorical skill to the task of ensuring that the United States does not repeat its past errors. The result is a work that will stand the test of time.

Unlike many "crisis books" that race quickly and superficially through the background, Pollack takes time to describe Saddam's rise to power and the course of his relationship both with the West and with the other states of the Middle East. The first part of the book is devoted to rehearsing that history, as well as to a detailed study of the development and fortunes of American policy vis-à-vis Iraq. Pollack then moves in the second section to the situation today, sketching the present state of Iraqi society, government, and armed forces, as well as of American policy and the diplomatic status quo in the region.

Considering the complexity of these subjects, Pollack's treatment of them is both thorough and admirably concise. But by far the most impressive part of the book is the third section, where he lays out the various options the U.S. might now pursue. In each case, he tries hard to make the best possible argument, exploring the advantages and disadvantages of a given approach and always citing responsible experts and senior officials. Case by case, he shows why every alternative to invasion is unacceptable.

The policy currently in place is one of economic and military sanctions coupled with UN inspections of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. This approach, which Pollack calls "containment," has collapsed to the point where it is irretrievable. The inspections program, as is well known, was ineffectual and in any case was terminated in 1998 and has yet to resume. In the meantime, the oil-for-food deals that were struck with Saddam, by means of which the international community hoped to alleviate the effects on the Iraqi people of UN-imposed sanctions, have only given him powerful economic weapons to use for his own ends. The two powers that have benefited the most under these programs have been France and Russia, which by no coincidence have also been the two states most staunchly opposed to President Bush's determination to oust Saddam from power. By now, any chance of preventing Saddam through relatively peaceful means from developing weapons of mass destruction has been lost.

THE NEXT option Pollack considers is "deterrence." Abandoning containment altogether, the U.S. could proceed to lift the sanctions, do away with its patrols of the skies over Iraq, and rely on its overwhelming military superiority and the threat of devastating retaliation to deter Saddam from using the nuclear weapons he will inevitably acquire. Unfortunately, Pollack argues, there is considerable evidence that Saddam is not deterrable. It is not that he is insane, but that he regularly miscalculates his own capabilities and those of his enemies, and regularly fails to perceive others' intentions in a rational way. As Pollack points out, Saddam has no experience of the West and no comprehension of it, and his intelligence apparatus fears giving him bad news more than it fears giving him bad information. A successful policy of deterrence rests on a basis of mutual understanding between adversaries, which simply does not exist in this case.

Concerning the next option, covert action, Pollack can speak with special authority, having worked with many of the groups in Iraq that we would rely on to execute it. His conclusion: it is hopeless. Saddam's control has been so pervasive, and the Iraqi population is so terrified, that the U.S. has had no success whatsoever in developing a meaningful opposition inside the country, while the organizations outside Iraq have no links or ties to anyone within. Although it is conceivable that some disaffected general or lucky assassin might manage to kill Saddam, we ourselves are not capable of developing a plan for an assassination or a coup d'état that would have any significant prospect of success.

Next is what Pollack calls the Afghan approach: arm and train a group of indigenous fighters and support them with American airpower and special forces but not with conventional ground troops. This approach is also hopeless. The only indigenous forces capable of bringing combat power into the field are the Kurds and the Shiites. Trying to enlist the former would inevitably alienate Turkey—without whose support such an operation could not succeed—as well as most of our allies in the region who rightly fear a descent into chaos. Enlisting the latter would bring us into line with the Iranians—and put us at their mercy.

In this connection, Pollack is also careful to note that Iraq is not Afghanistan. There, the combatants we used had already been fighting for twenty years to overthrow a weak and unpopular government. In Iraq, by contrast, no opposition group has fighters in the field at this time, and Saddam's military, although no match for American skill and technology, could easily handle any effort that local forces might hope to mount. Nor, Pollack argues, could we rely on airpower to prevent such a fate, as a close look at our experience in similar situations in Kosovo and even in the Gulf war reveals.

In the end, there is only one option left: massive and rapid invasion. In Pollack's view, there can be no doubt of the outcome of such an enterprise, only of the cost and the effort required. The probability, he writes, is that we would win the military battle fairly easily, quickly, and at relatively little cost. But victory for Pollack does not mean only depriving Saddam of weapons of mass destruction; it means depriving Sad-

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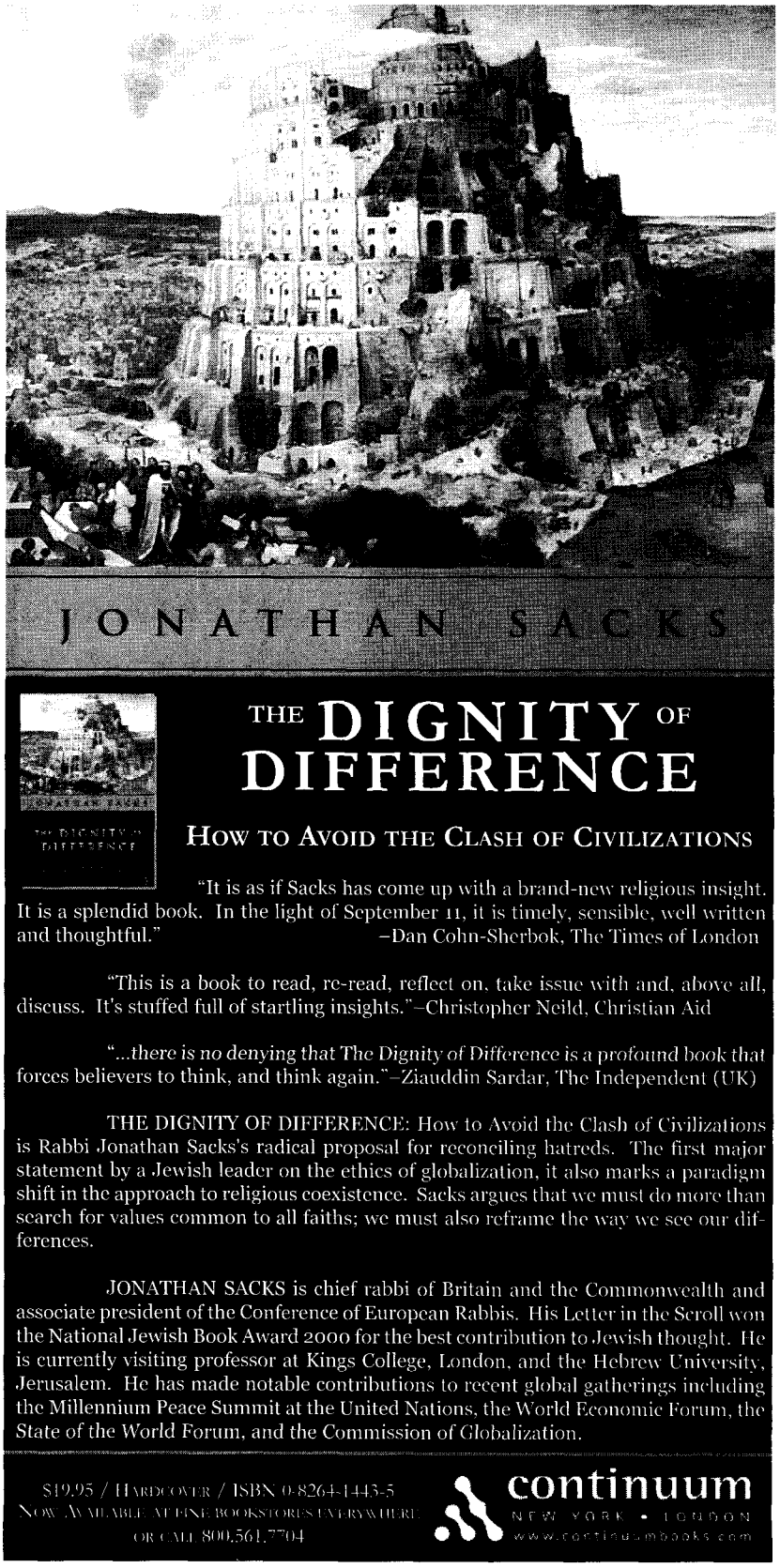
dam of power, and then taking an active part in helping to shape the peace that follows.

As Pollack makes clear, Saddam's regime is as deeply evil as any since Stalin's Russia—which is no surprise, given that he consciously studied both Stalin's and Hitler's methods before improving upon them. Just as in Soviet Russia of the 1930's, children are encouraged to inform on their parents and publicly rewarded for doing so. Torture, as well as the rape of female family members, is the method of first resort even for those merely under suspicion of disloyalty. Saddam has frequently used chemical agents against his own population, and has conducted punitive operations against Kurds and Shiites designed to exterminate whole villages and destroy whole areas of settlement. His troops have created an ecological disaster in the south by draining the swamps that hid Shiite rebels—to say nothing of the cataclysm he caused by igniting the Kuwaiti oilfields and dumping oil into the Persian Gulf.

For all these reasons, not to mention our own record of sitting by or delaying while we knew what atrocities were taking place, the question of who replaces Saddam, Pollack argues, must be a matter of great importance to us. We cannot permit the country to break into warring regions or to fall under the sway of one or more of its neighbors. And there are other options in Iraq that, if not as bad as Saddam himself, are still completely unacceptable. Would we allow him to be succeeded by his maniacal and murderous son Qusayy? Or by a senior general of the Republican Guard? The carelessness with which we have dealt with postwar Afghanistan cannot be tolerated in a country that controls a significant portion of the world's oil supply, has a highly advanced program to develop weapons of mass destruction, and still maintains powerful armed forces. On the other hand, a peaceful and liberal-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JONATHAN SACKS is chief rabbi of Britain and the Commonwealth and associate president of the Conference of European Rabbis. His Letter in the Scroll won the National Jewish Book Award 2000 for the best contribution to Jewish thought. He is currently visiting professor at Kings College, London, and the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. He has made notable contributions to recent global gatherings including the Millennium Peace Summit at the United Nations, the World Economic Forum, the State of the World Forum, and the Commission of Globalization.
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izing regime in that country could have a transforming effect on the entire region.

Removing Saddam Hussein from power and replacing him with a stable government bent on the well-being of the Iraqi people is an extraordinary priority of this country. The only way to accomplish that task is by means of a large-scale ground and air invasion of Iraq. No fair reader of Kenneth Pollack's indispensable book can fail to be convinced of the correctness and justice of this conclusion.

Redeeming the Lost

In the Image
by Dara Horn
Norton. 278 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
David Gelernter

IN THIS beautiful first novel, twenty-five-year-old Dara Horn meets you like a torch-bearer in the dark entryway of a mysterious castle, and you follow her into a fascinating labyrinth without looking back. The journey is intriguing. More important, you never lose the sense that you are moving inexorably toward a significant goal. The novel's intricate architecture allows you vital glimpses of your ultimate destination along the way. And if it does not succeed everywhere, if certain halls and passageways might have been done differently or walled off entirely, *In the Image* is not merely a striking success as a whole but a technical tour de force.

It is a story about Jews in the 20th century. A young woman named Leora has a best friend who dies on page one, and thereafter hovers like an angel of mercy over the rest of the story. Leora is drawn into this dead friend's family circle and gets entangled in its history. *In the Image* is a story about today, with another story about turn-of-the-20th-century America and Europe running alongside, and a Holocaust-era story caught (or vise-locked) in between.

In one sense, it covers a lot of ground: Manhattan and the suburbs today, Jewish slums of New York long ago, World War I on the eastern front, the Jews of Europe before the Holocaust. It is about Vienna, Amsterdam, and the dollhouse collection in the Rijksmuseum, the national gallery of the Netherlands.

The Rijksmuseum's dollhouses are a recurring theme. They are not toys but artworks—and the novel itself is a kind of artwork dollhouse, a lovingly constructed microcosm. Its pieces fit together with a fine inevitability, and you encounter meticulously crafted surprises along the way. As in other dollhouse artworks, the structure itself is more important than the characters who live there. But the structure has a strange, compelling, romantic fascination.

For example: two youngish men meet at a diamond dealer's in modern Manhattan. One is about to propose marriage, and seeks the perfect stone for the occasion. The other is a Hasid who has married the boss's daughter, but has a more complex past than you might suspect. The two discuss diamonds in exactly the way an overinformed, on-his-guard customer and a talented salesman *ought* to discuss them. ("Sometimes you'll have two stones that are technically the same value and the same number of natural inclusions. But on one of them . . .") Simultaneously, they circle each other (opponents in a game of Spend Money, as if they were contemplating a knife fight)—each trying to size the other up.

So far, merely a well-executed set piece. But along the way the reader comes to see that each is profoundly wrong about the other. And also comes to see—although negotiations begin, drag out, come to a successful close, and the combatants themselves never know it—that in both these two seemingly far-apart lives, the same girl has played a crucial part.

The result is a deeply satisfying sense of hidden watching. It is a brilliant scene, and there are others like it—scenes that impart a sense of arrival, and of seeing more deeply than the characters see, without destroying your sympathy either with them or with their story.

THE BOOK covers a lot of ground—but in another sense is tightly focused. Every main character (and every minor one except for a handful) is a Jew who knows and somehow cares that he is a Jew. Heroes and heroines and vicious villains, victims and victimizers, ordinary and extraordinary—all of them are admitted (so to speak) Jews. The novel is set in the land of Judaism.

Thus Dara Horn joins a small but striking new wave of American Jewish storytellers. (Several of them have published in COMMENTARY.) Nearly the whole older generation of big-deal American Jewish writers knew Jewish America inside out but knew nothing about Judaism. The exceptions, of whom Herman Wouk and Chaim Potok had the highest profiles, published books that were and remain pathetically popular. Readers were eager to hear about life in the land of Judaism—so much so that, although the Wouks and Potoks were obviously discerning and deeply knowledgeable, they never had to do a serious day's literary labor in their lives. Had their works been apartment blocks instead of literary productions, most of them would have been condemned as uninhabitable and torn down years ago.

Dara Horn, however, is a serious

DAVID GELERNTER *is the author of* Machine Beauty. *The third installment of his series, "Judaism Beyond Words," appeared in last month's* COMMENTARY.

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worker. Even the seeming weaknesses of her book turn out to be strengths. The only character to emerge with perfect clarity is Bill Landsmann, who rises through its center like a great elm in a courtyard, connecting past and future. The other main characters sometimes dip into shadow and blend into each other. Leora—the wise and deep, sardonically unpredictable, unaccountably attractive modern New Jerseyite—resembles Leah, who came to America in the late 19th century. Jake, who admires and champions Leora, resembles Aaron, who admired and championed Leah. But as you read, these and other resemblances come to seem less like weaknesses than strategic triumphs. By allowing characters to blend together, they fuse layers of time like molten glass into a transparent, crystalline whole.

Occasionally the narrative loses its footing, and once in a while it falls on its rear. Leora tells her aspiring lover that she has slept with someone else, but will not sleep with him: "It's just that Jason was the kind of boy you sleep with, that's all." (As a bonus, she happens to be "half-naked.") For a young woman not to sleep with her boyfriend might (possibly) be admirable, but if this is the gruesome way in which she chooses to deliver the bad news, every non-subnormal male I have ever met would walk out, slam the door (at least metaphorically) and never come back. The boyfriend in the novel is merely frustrated-yet-charmed. Dream on, Authoress! (On the other hand, this snippet of dialogue accomplishes something that you—cynical reader—thought you would never live to see. It is actually shocking.)

The flaws in this diamond are real; the triumphs are realer. Of the book's many interwoven themes and symbols, one of the most painfully evocative is the image of discarded tefillin at the bottom of the Hudson River. A set of tefillin is a pair of small boxes with sacred texts inside.

JUST ELECTIONS

Creating a Fair Electoral Process in the United States

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"In *Just Elections* Dennis Thompson provides an acute, extensively documented analysis of American electoral institutions, a penetrating and judicious critique of their weaknesses, and realistic proposals for possible changes, all grounded on the fundamental democratic values of equal respect and liberty. Everyone concerned about our electoral institutions will profit from his book—as will those who may believe that they have no reason for concern."
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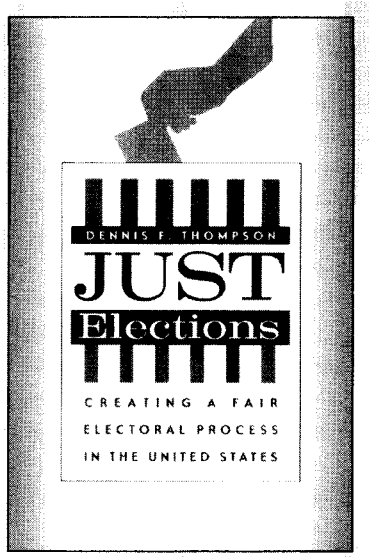

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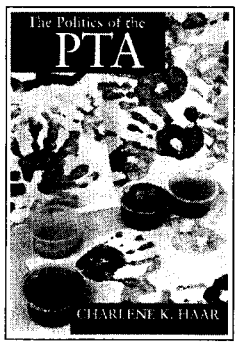

Mainstream coverage of the PTA treats the organization as a group of parents dedicated to improving education. In this groundbreaking new book, *The Politics of the PTA*, Charlene K. Haar shows that this common perception is deeply misguided. The PTA merely echoes and legitimates the policies of the teacher unions, even when these policies are clearly detrimental to educational reform.

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Observant Jewish men wear them in the morning at prayer. On arriving in New York from Europe, thousands of Jews, the author reports, threw their tefillin overboard—in tragically pardonable eagerness to be no longer Jews but Americans.

American Jewish writers of the postwar generation were mostly still discarders and profaners of sacred things. Like hysterics reenacting a half-remembered trauma, they kept throwing their tefillin overboard (or leaving them secretly in an empty locker at the Y, as Philip Roth reports of his elderly father in the semi-autobiographical *Patrimony* of 1991, stipulating that he too would have no use for them). *In the Image* enrolls Dara Horn as a distinguished member of a small but commanding band of new Jewish writers who are patiently hauling the waterlogged remnants out of the river, redeeming what had been lost. Her novel will be remembered.

Counter-Jihad

The War Against the Terror Masters: Why It Happened. Where We Are Now. How We'll Win.
by Michael A. Ledeen
St. Martin's Press. 288 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
Marin J. Strmecki

IN THIS book, Michael Ledeen, a longtime student of international politics, helps us understand the genesis of the current war, the reasons for our failure to address the gathering threat in the 1990's, and the path we must take to win.

Ledeen traces the rise of the terrorist threat back to the cold war, when the Soviet Union stood at the apex of the world's terror networks, providing financing and expertise both directly and through intermediaries like Syria. But it was the Khomeini revolution in Iran in the late 1970's that inaugurated what we now know as Islamist terror. Khomeini developed an ideology rooted in rage against unbelievers and dedicated to the violent expansion of Islam and the glorification of the "cult of martyrdom." Iran proceeded to advance this program through an "assembly line" for terrorists that recruited in mosques, schooled its recruits in *madrassas*, and trained them in clandestine and paramilitary skills. The culmination was movements like Hizbullah, today one of the world's most effective terrorist organizations.

Al Qaeda, which for Ledeen represents the second generation of Islamist terror, has replicated Khomeini's vision but with the wider objective of creating a genuine mass movement. In his workmanlike account, Ledeen places al Qaeda in the nexus of the international jihadist movement that is rooted in Wahhabi Islam, and takes us through the main stages of its evolution: the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, the rise of Osama bin Laden to leadership, the protection afforded by the radical leadership of Sudan and the Taliban, and so forth.

Contrary to the image of spontaneous and autonomous groups motivated by poverty or specific political grievances, the terror network, Ledeen shows, cannot operate without state sponsorship or support. He goes further: although "Western intelligence services have long been reluctant to accept the fact," it is demonstrable that "modern Islamic terrorism is above all else a weapon used by hostile nation states against their enemies in the Middle East and the West."

Another counterintuitive fact about the terror network is that it bridges both the political divide between Islamism and secular movements like Baathism and the sectarian divide between the Shiite and Sunni branches of Islam. "The best way to think of the terror network," Ledeen argues,

> is as a collection of mafia families. Sometimes they cooperate, sometimes they argue, sometimes they even kill one another. But they can always put aside their differences whenever there is a common enemy.

TURNING TO the failures of U.S. policy, especially after Abu Nidal and Hizbullah established themselves in the United States in the 1980's, to be followed shortly by Hamas, Islamic Jihad, al Qaeda, and others, Ledeen acidly notes how our domestic-security agencies simply declined for the most part to get involved, while the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which might have helped keep terrorists out, was, in a word, dysfunctional. Lacking personnel with expertise in the relevant languages and cultures, law-enforcement agencies focused on traditional crime-fighting techniques and/or accepted inhibiting and self-defeating practices imposed by Congress. In the 1980's, according to Oliver "Buck" Revell, the former chief of counterterrorism for the FBI, the bureau's capabilities in this area were at "ground zero."

Ledeen tells a similar tale about the CIA. The effects of Stansfield Turner's purge of its clandestine service in the late 1970's have never been fully overcome. In the 1990's, risk-averse managers in the agency adopted guidelines discouraging the recruitment of foreign agents who had dubious human-rights records; this ludicrous restriction made it virtually impossible to penetrate senior circles of terrorist groups. Careless leaks, including the disclosure of U.S. intercepts of bin Laden's satellite phone calls in 1998, compromised efforts at collecting data. Gradually, the best people left, and the intelligence community fell into the hands of mediocrities.

MARIN J. STRMECKI *is a political analyst specializing in southwest Asian affairs.*

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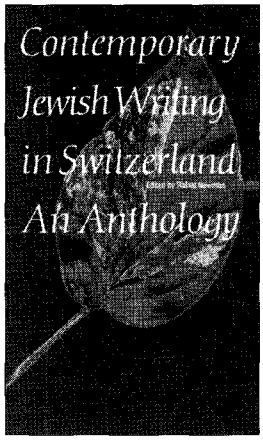
Most important, President Bill Clinton was both indifferent to the needs of the intelligence agencies and unwilling to act aggressively against identified terrorists. As Ledeen observes, "Without a clear national mission set by the President, even the best intelligence organization will lack focus, and its case officers and analysts will avoid taking risks."

But now we are in a new situation, and the question is how best to proceed. For Ledeen, the great imperative is to develop a balanced strategy, one combining both military and political elements. Since the appeal of Islamist states and movements depends on their continuing success, the United States must win ever more rounds in its war on terror. The road to this destination runs through the "radical transformation of several Middle Eastern countries from oppressive tyrannies to freer societies."

Ledeen is particularly good on Iran. He documents the widespread popular opposition to the clerical regime—a story still poorly covered in the national media—and calls for more assertive U.S. policies to promote change in that country, including political and financial support for the opposition, increased radio broadcasting, and coordination of U.S. statements and actions with opposition leaders.

Regarding Iraq, Ledeen comments obliquely on the need for an American assault to bring down Saddam Hussein but, with an eye toward the Afghan model, also favors providing major support to indigenous oppositionist movements—the Kurds, the Shiites, the Iraqi National Congress. With respect to Syria and Saudi Arabia, he unequivocally backs regime change, noting that the United States must be prepared to "extend the war to the Arabian peninsula" if, as a result of our actions against others, the most radical Wahhabi faction seizes power there.

Contemporary Jewish Writing in Switzerland
An Anthology
Edited by Rafaël Newman
"Thoughtful, affecting, and also scathing writings. They are by turns meltingly engaging and conceptually invigorating."
—Stanley Corngold, author of *Complex Pleasures: Forms of Feeling in German Literature*



Antisemitism Worldwide 2000/1
Unique in scope, structure, and variety of sources, this volume is an analysis of antisemitism in 2000 and early 2001.

Studies in Jewish Civilization, Volume 12
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What They Don't Want You to Know About Television and Videos
Abridged from the "Television" Chapter of *To Kindle a Soul*
Lawrence Kelemen
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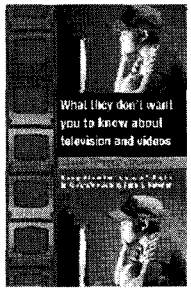

Lawrence Kelemen's *To Kindle a Soul: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Parents and Teachers* became a bestseller overnight. In the year since its release it has been featured on over 100 television and radio programs, spawned parent- and teacher-training groups, and become the subject of study at fine universities worldwide. Kelemen took us into the homes and schools of some of Jerusalem's most traditional Jewish communities, revealing and analyzing their highly effective childrearing strategies. His crystal-clear presentation and reassuring voice walked us through step-by-step instructions for resolving the most intractable educational challenges, and 400 studies from Harvard, Yale and other fine research centers confirmed the wisdom of these ancient approaches. Now the most controversial chapter of this popular work has been edited and republished separately for use by high school students, educators and parents.

From the Author's Introduction:

"At the time I was writing *To Kindle a Soul*, I was unsure how thoroughly to present the case against television and videos. On one hand, the TV chapter was intended only to illustrate one practical application of the book's theory. On the other hand, that chapter demonstrated decisively the wisdom behind the entire approach. Ultimately, I included all the data I had collected, and the TV chapter thus became the most thorough summary in the popular literature of the deleterious effects of television -- and one of the most discussed sections of the book.

After careful consideration, I am now giving in to popular demand and releasing this student edition of the TV chapter. At first, I felt that students addicted to "the tube" would not be open to examining the potential dangers of watching TV. To my pleasant surprise, this has not been true. Indeed, many students have told me that they suspect TV is harmful, but to muster sufficient will-power to kick the habit they need a clear, concise presentation of the facts. Here it is."

Lawrence Kelemen is professor of education at Neve College in Jerusalem, where he also lectures in modern and medieval philosophy. He has been a visiting lecturer at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the University of London, and UCLA.

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THE STRENGTHS of this book start with its title: finally, someone has come up with a formulation that would have us going to war not against a tactic—terrorism—but against a political-military enemy. More than most, Ledeen also understands the frankly ideological nature of this conflict, in which "victory" will turn on the question of what kinds of political regimes end up inhabiting the vast stretch of territory from Egypt to India *after* we take action. If militant Islamic or radical and anti-American Ba'athist regimes survive, we will have lost. If, with our help, moderate, progressive, or democratic systems take root, we will have won.

In this connection, Ledeen is certainly correct to place primary stress on local allies who share our interests and values and to look askance at the approaches historically favored by the State Department and the CIA—namely, engaging the "reformist" clerics in Iran or triggering a coup within the military in Iraq. Recruiting another group of thugs to defeat the group of thugs currently in power can only result in what some have aptly called Saddamism without Saddam.

Strongest in the case of Iran, Ledeen's prescriptions in other cases are sometimes weak on specifics. He does not address in detail the nature and extent of the necessary U.S. military role in Iraq, and when it comes to Syria and Saudi Arabia, his policy guidance is exceedingly vague. More important, he all but overlooks the crucial case of Pakistan, largely eliding the role of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence agency in the rise of the terrorist threat in that country and scanting the problems involved in dealing with a state armed with nuclear weapons but riddled with rogue elements that continue to traffic with the worst Islamist figures and even to protect al Qaeda and Taliban leaders. In Pakistan, regime change, though just as necessary as elsewhere, is an exceedingly dicey proposition.

Nevertheless, Ledeen is right to be optimistic about what he dubs "our revolutionary war." His Schumpeter-like call for a strategy of "creative destruction" is fundamentally sound. All the evidence suggests that such a strategy, if prosecuted as the rhetoric of the Bush administration promises, would find substantial allies in each of the countries ruled by the terror masters. It only remains to be seen whether American policy will ultimately express the courage of the President's tirelessly stated convictions.

Not Silly Putty

The Blank Slate:
The Modern Denial of
Human Nature
by Steven Pinker
Viking. 528 pp. $27.95

Reviewed by
Kevin Shapiro

WHY IS the idea of an inborn human nature so controversial? What does it imply about how our society should be organized, about our conceptions of equality and justice, about education, religion, the media, the arts? Would we really be better off if there were no such thing as human nature—or if we chose to ignore it? These are the questions Steven Pinker tackles in a passionately argued defense of the thesis that the natural history of our species places powerful constraints on who we are and how we think.

Pinker, a professor of psychology at MIT, established his academic reputation by studying how children acquire the rules of grammar. His first nonacademic book, *The Language Instinct* (1994), was acclaimed for its lucid and witty explanation of an ability that is so central to the human experience that few of us have ever thought about how it works. At heart, however, *The Language Instinct* is about what is both common and unique to human beings. Observed Pinker:

> Modern intellectual life is suffused with a relativism that denies that there is such a thing as a universal human nature, and the existence of a language instinct in any form challenges that denial.

Since writing that sentence, Pinker has marshaled a panoply of other evidence to support this challenge. He laid out much of it in *How the Mind Works* (1998), a more ambitious and somewhat more tedious volume that touched on topics ranging from color vision to phobias and sexual attraction—all allegedly part and parcel of human nature, as designed by natural selection and illuminated by the "reverse-engineering" method of evolutionary psychology.*

One of the strong implications of this argument is that the human mind works in much the same way for everyone, because all human beings have relatively recent common ancestors. Another is that when there are differences across individuals, some (but not all) of these must have genetic origins, since variation in genes is the grist for evolution by natural selection.

Both *The Language Instinct* and *How the Mind Works* were aimed at convincing the reader that the human mind has a surprisingly rich innate structure, with various modules custom-built by evolution to serve specific adaptive functions like speaking, seeing, and reproducing. In both of them, Pinker lobbed his arguments with verve and alacrity at the most popular alternative view: that the mind is essentially silly putty, and that commonalities and differences in how people think can be traced to commonalities and differ-

KEVIN SHAPIRO *is a researcher in neuroscience at Harvard.*

* *How the Mind Works* was reviewed by Arthur B. Cody in the March 1998 COMMENTARY.

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ences in their environments. Clearly, if Pinker's program is on the right track, that idea is wrongheaded. In *The Blank Slate*, the third installment of the trilogy, he now endeavors to tell us why it is also destructive and dangerous, at least insofar as it is believed by so many of those who occupy the rarefied strata of our intellectual elites.

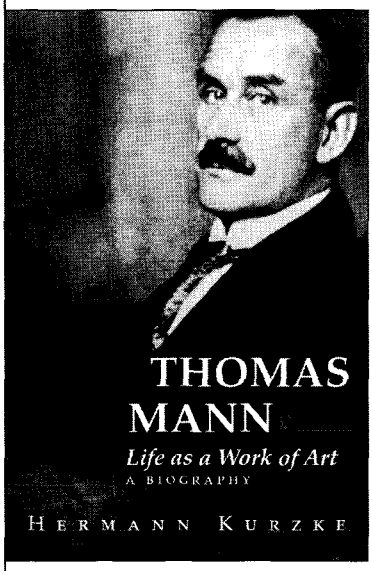
This is not, indeed, a task taken on lightly. Questioning the Blank Slate—which is how Pinker refers to the "silly putty" view—is more than unpopular; for many, it is seen as bordering on immoral. And woe betide those accused of the heresy of biological determinism, which has come to stand for any suggestion that genetic factors play a role in shaping patterns of human behavior. Scientists who study the heritability of traits like intelligence and aggressiveness, or who advance evolutionary explanations for some aspects of cognition, are commonly denounced as racist (or fascist or sexist), picketed, harassed, and sometimes assaulted by protesters.

Even scientists who largely agree with Pinker's point of view have chastised him publicly for bringing up the topic—evidently either because they fear that discussing human nature in a popular book will generate misunderstandings, or because they are simply unwilling to believe that anyone still takes the Blank Slate seriously. Pinker, however, believes that the Blank Slate has had socially and morally disastrous consequences, and he devotes the considerable force of his talent to demolishing it.

Pinker begins by laying out what he takes as the central tenets—and obvious flaws—of the Blank Slate theory as well as of its two most important corollaries, the Noble Savage and the Ghost in the Machine.

According to Pinker, the Blank Slate is demonstrably false. Discoveries in neuroscience have shown that the mind comes equipped with various specialized functions, in-

"A monument of good sense and sensitivity."*



Thomas Mann

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Hermann Kurzke

Translated by Leslie Willson

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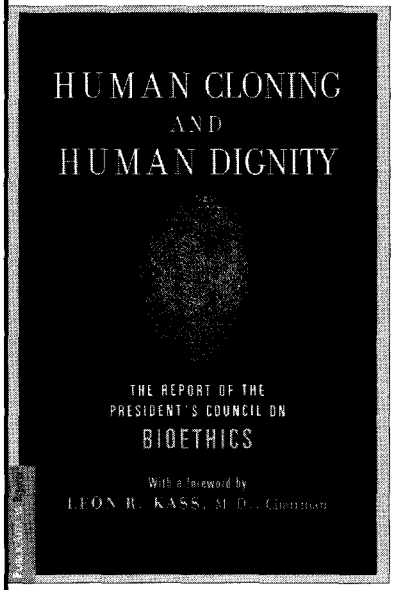

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cluding those responsible for learning languages, estimating numerical quantities, picking out objects in the world, and attributing thoughts and intentions to other human beings. Some of these systems, moreover, vary from person to person in ways that are influenced by the genes. Behavioral geneticists have shown that about half of the variability in a trait like IQ is biological in origin, confirming the long-held suspicion that—all other things being equal—smart people tend to have smart children.

This is not to say that environmental factors play no role in determining how an individual mind works: Japanese babies do not learn Japanese if their parents speak English. But even if the contents of the mind are subject to alteration, the slate itself cannot be blank; if it were, nobody would learn any language, or possibly anything at all.

What goes for the Blank Slate goes also for its two corollaries, if with certain qualifications. The doctrine of the Noble Savage holds that man in the state of nature is happy and peaceful; our present miseries, therefore, arise from the corrupting defects of our institutions. To this doctrine Pinker credits a number of bromides that enjoy wide currency, among them the notions that crime is caused by discrimination or abuse; that gender roles are learned; and that violent behavior can be picked up from television and video games. But there is no empirical support for these ideas, and in any case anthropology has discredited the Noble Savage. Extensive field research shows that pre-state societies have far higher rates of violence than do societies with strong governing institutions, and are plagued by almost constant warfare.

The Ghost in the Machine is a special case. It corresponds roughly to the idea that our behavior is controlled by something other than the activity of our brains. Philosophical dualists believe that we are made of two kinds of stuff: physical stuff—the body—and thinking stuff, identified variously as the mind, conscious will, or the soul.

If *this* were true, however, it would be pointless to study the brain for clues about our (mis)behavior. Most behavioral scientists today reject the dualist distinction, operating instead on the assumption that thought is reducible to physical processes. Still, dualism in one form or another is notoriously difficult—and probably impossible—to disprove empirically. Moreover, though Pinker sees dualism as allied with the Blank Slate, it is in fact compatible with almost any theory about what constitutes human nature—provided one has an account for how the ghost got in the machine in the first place.

IN PINKER'S view, the Ghost in the Machine arises out of one of our deepest anxieties about studying human nature: namely, the fear that free will may turn out to be only an illusion, as it would seemingly have to be if our behavior is determined by nothing more than electrical activity in the brain. Pinker writes that the persistence of theories like the Ghost, the Savage, and the Slate is related to this kind of existential anxiety: the fear that our lives have no meaning or purpose; the fear that all men are not really equal; the fear that our nature, if it exists, is deeply and permanently flawed.

In the second part of the book, Pinker takes on these fears in turn. A biological understanding of human nature should actually *enrich* our sense of purpose, he writes, by illuminating the adaptive mechanisms that produce both the sweetness of fruit and our sense of right and wrong. Our political ideals are also safe: the fact that human beings are not literally equal does not justify discrimination; it does, however, force us to think about the tradeoff between freedom and material equality, and about how to ensure that the talented are not punished

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while the less fortunate are not cast down. That is certainly preferable to the ideology of the Blank Slate, which can license any number of perverse injustices committed in the name of equality. For example, if people do not differ in their innate endowments, anyone who is better off (say, kulaks and bourgeoisie) must be greedy and evil—fair targets for liquidation.

Pinker does not claim to have solved the problem of free will, but he does make the case that we do not need dualism in order to hold people accountable for their actions: even if biology influences our behavior, every decision we make is the product of fine-tuned cognitive and emotional mechanisms designed to weigh temptation against the possibility of punishment. This is an argument, Pinker thinks, not for throwing up our hands in the face of iniquity, but rather for taking criminal justice seriously. To those worried that giving up the Ghost absolves wrongdoers of responsibility for their actions by chalking up sin to biology, Pinker poses the alternative of "environmental determinism," the popular but ultimately ridiculous idea that antisocial behavior can be explained, and excused, as the result of a troubled childhood—or, as the Jets in *West Side Story* put it, "we're depraved on accounta we're deprived." This hardly seems more appealing.

Of course, one would still like to understand *why* human beings are sometimes depraved; why, sometimes, we are selfish, irrational, violent, and bigoted. The final chapters of *The Blank Slate* are devoted to plumbing some of these mysteries with the help of the theory of natural selection. Cultures of "honor," for example, emerge when government—and the threat of deterrence—is weak, as it is in inner cities and frontier zones. In such cases, individuals (usually men) often resort to violence to protect their social status, which is a proxy for their ability to provide for their families and hence for their attractiveness as mates. Even an extreme behavior like rape may be a kind of last-ditch strategy for the propagation of the rapist's genes.

Again, Pinker takes care to argue that evolutionary success does not equal moral justification. For him, morality must be based on a fundamental regard for the interests of each and every human being; it follows that we ought to punish cheaters who harm or exploit others for their own advantage. Indeed, the visceral moral sense that some acts are wrong may itself have been cobbled together from bits and pieces of more ancient instincts, like the one that instills disgust for sickening foods and sources of contamination.

In Pinker's view, in sum, our evolutionary history has saddled us with a host of more and less problematic quirks, ranging from gang violence to teenage angst—and even to the widespread popularity, much lamented by art critics, of realist landscape paintings. (Supposedly these depict environmental conditions that were preferred over the course of human evolution.) Understanding these biases will not make them go away, but it will better equip us to make sometimes difficult choices, both in our personal lives and in the political sphere.

Pinker is one of those rare writers who is at once persuasive and comprehensive, informative and entertaining. His argument is illuminated by science, and lots of it—but also by literary excerpts, references to popular culture, cartoons, occasional Yiddishisms, and personal anecdotes. (For instance, it seems that Pinker lost his faith in anarchism after the Montreal police strike of 1969 led to widespread looting and destruction of property.) In short, Pinker uses everything he can think of to make the case for an inborn and largely immutable human nature. For the most part, he succeeds.

But some aspects of his argument

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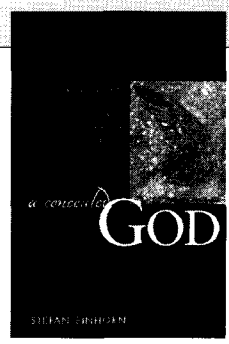

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By Stefan Einhorn
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are more credible than others. His discussion of the origins of aggression and violence, for example, is backed up by a long tradition of research in anthropology and comparative psychology. By contrast, his discussion of the origins of morality is rather more speculative, and rather less convincing.

There are also points at which he is needlessly—if revealingly—antagonistic. In a chapter on gender, Pinker admonishes the bioethicist Leon Kass for suggesting that many women are unhappy postponing marriage to pursue careers. To Pinker, this somehow amounts to a dubious and unacceptable infringement of women's choices. Yet he himself makes similar points later in the same chapter, arguing that women are less interested than men in career advancement and should not be condemned for choosing to spend more time raising families than hammering at the glass ceiling. Natural selection, after all, makes it so: men are designed to invest heavily in social status (in order to attract women); women are designed to invest heavily in their offspring.

Pinker takes pains to remind readers that his arguments are not meant to justify sex discrimination—far from it: he means only to point out that the kind of sexual parity favored by radical feminists may end up harming many women. So why does he not give the same benefit of the doubt to Kass, whose only substantive difference from Pinker on this point seems to be that he has failed to consider the dynamics of mating among australopithecenes? (The answer, one supposes, is that Kass belongs to a species even more suspect than environmental determinists; he is a political conservative.) In a sense, it hardly matters whether differences between the sexes arose because of natural selection or for some other reason. The point is that there *are* differences between the sexes, and they cannot be erased or ignored without consequence.

FROM A pragmatic point of view, the most serious weakness of Pinker's thesis is its reliance on the logic of evolutionary psychology. It is sometimes supposed that evolutionary psychology is merely a collection of reasonable conjectures and just-so stories. That is not true; it is supported and constrained by evidence from anthropology, behavioral genetics, comparative zoology, psychology, neuroscience, sociology, and a host of other fields. The problem is that, at best, and even when there is evidence that fixed biological factors contribute to behavior, all that evidence can show is that an evolutionary explanation is plausible, not that it is either necessary or sufficient.

The major point in favor of evolutionary psychology is that no *more* plausible explanation for human nature appears to be forthcoming. Thomas Hobbes, Edmund Burke, Adam Smith, and like-minded thinkers may have proffered more profound insights on human social behavior than anyone before or since, but they could not speak to the question of *why* they might be right. Evolution holds out the promise of a rationale. Nor is it a small coincidence that human societies flourish under conditions compatible with the pursuit of selfish goals, just as natural selection seems to demand, but languish under conditions that compel altruism, self-sacrifice, and other kinds of behavior that would be disadvantageous from an evolutionary point of view. Unsurprisingly, some leading social theorists on the Right—including Francis Fukuyama, James Q. Wilson, and Charles Murray—have embraced evolutionary psychology to at least some degree.

This is not to say that psychology and biology can tell us what kind of society we should have. Eugenics and other dubious social movements that originally gave Darwinism a bad name are justly despised, based as they are on the fallacious assumption that whatever obtains in nature is moral. Some moral precepts, like the idea that every person is equal before the law, obviously transcend the facts of biology. All the same, the science of human nature can inform us about the trade-offs involved in making decisions about the kind of society in which we want to live, and the extent to which our ideals are suited—or unsuited—to our instincts.

And how are those choices and decisions to be made? Enter morality, consciousness, and free will: elusive quantities whose origins still remain wrapped in substantial mystery and before whose so far unknowable operations even the garrulous and knowing Steven Pinker must in the end fall silent.

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H.R. McMaster is a national security affairs fellow at the Hoover Institution.

The thought that the attacks of September 11, 2001, could have been prevented is frustrating. Intelligence indicators went unheeded, including information from 1998 suggesting terrorist plans to fly an explosive-laden aircraft into the World Trade Center or detonate explosives at an airport. We learn that the director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, stated in December 1998 that the United States was "at war" with Osama bin Laden; he urged intelligence officials to spare no resources in the effort against Al Qaeda. In the summer of 2001 intelligence received information that bin Laden associates "were planning attacks in the United States with explosives," and thirty-three communications that indicated a "possible, imminent terrorist attack." Viewing evidence in hindsight, however, and considering it outside the context of all available information, can lead to simplistic conclusions. Broadening the inquiry to include other cases of strategic surprise can help us learn the right lessons from 9-11.

Nearly sixty years before terrorists struck Washington and New York, half the Japanese fleet moved to within striking distance of Oahu and achieved complete surprise at Pearl Harbor. **Revisiting why intelligence indicators did not generate warnings and defensive action before December 7, 1941, seems relevant to September 11, 2001.**

After Pearl Harbor, Congress also held hearings that evoked similar emotions of disappointment. A March 1941 report stated that a Japanese declaration of war might be preceded "by a surprise attack on Oahu including ships and installations on Pearl Harbor" and suggested patrols to prevent "surface or air surprise." A week before the attack, an analyst suggested that Japanese radio pattern changes indicated "active operations on a large scale." On December 3, Washington learned that Japanese diplomatic and consular posts were to destroy their codes and secret documents. On December 6, the FBI in Honolulu witnessed members of the Japanese consulate burning papers. Hours before the attack, a U.S. Navy destroyer identified a Japanese submarine in the harbor. Then as today it seemed that officials should have taken defensive action.

In her classic study *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (1962), Roberta Wohlstetter concluded that the surprise at Pearl Harbor was not surprising at all. Evidence of an impending attack was muted by the "noise" of conflicting information. Moreover, false alarms had desensitized officials to warnings. Bureaucratic barriers and preserving the secrecy of intelligence sources prevented analysts from connecting disparate indicators.

Although we may never eliminate the possibility of strategic surprise, we can reduce that possibility. The 9-11 attacks appear unprecedented in their brutality against innocent Americans, but we must resist viewing them in isolation. Many of the same causes of the Pearl Harbor surprise were present before September 11. Wohlstetter's book is representative of a rich literature on the subject of strategic surprise, studies generated in large measure by fears of a Soviet thermonuclear attack. History, however, cannot provide us with a specific plan of action to foil future attacks. But it can help us ask the right questions and avoid oversimplification.

Defending our homeland and our interests abroad requires enduring commitment, resolute action, and constant reassessment. As Sir Michael Howard reminds us, history may not be able to make us clever for the next time, but it can make us wise forever.

— H.R. McMaster

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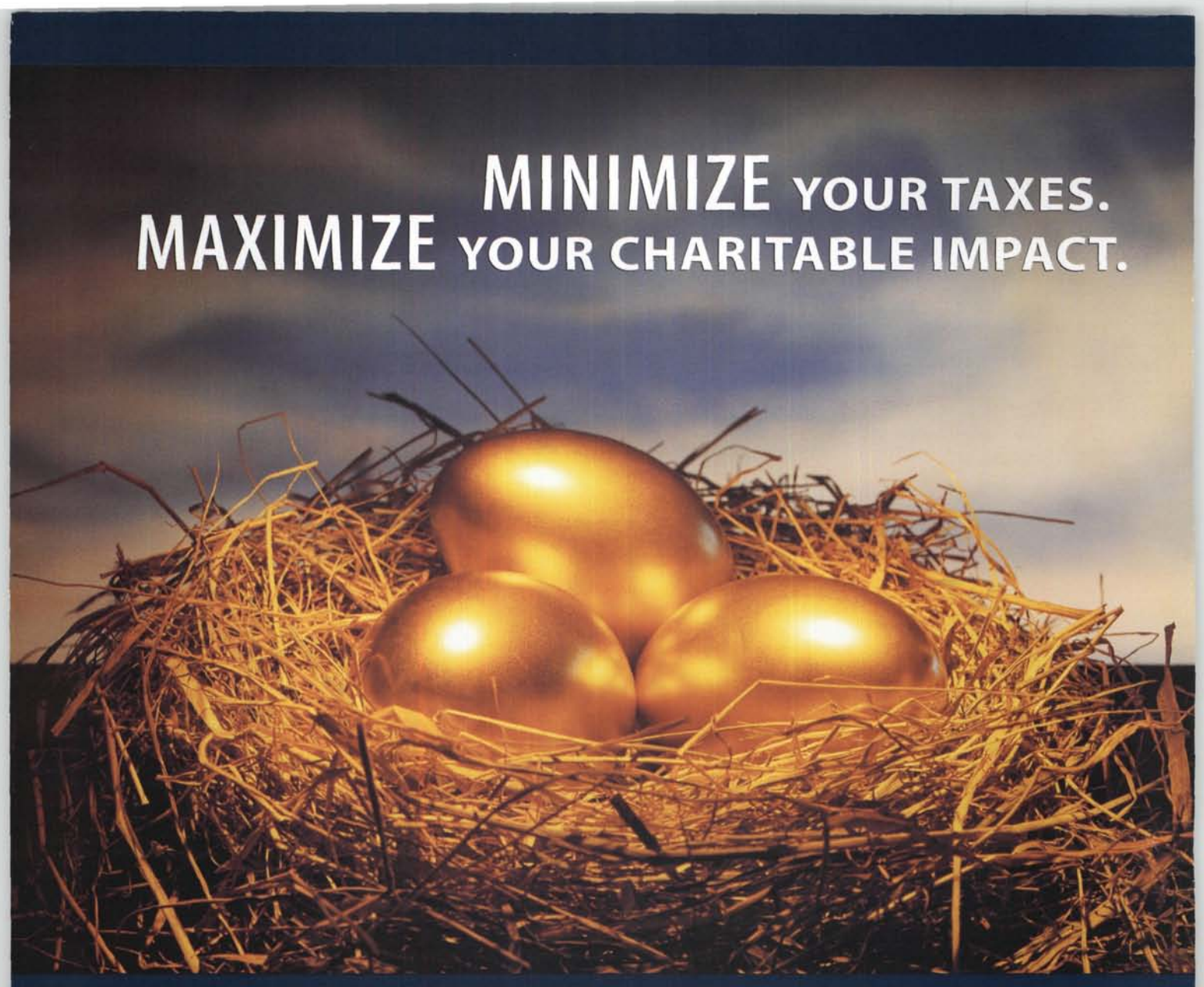

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